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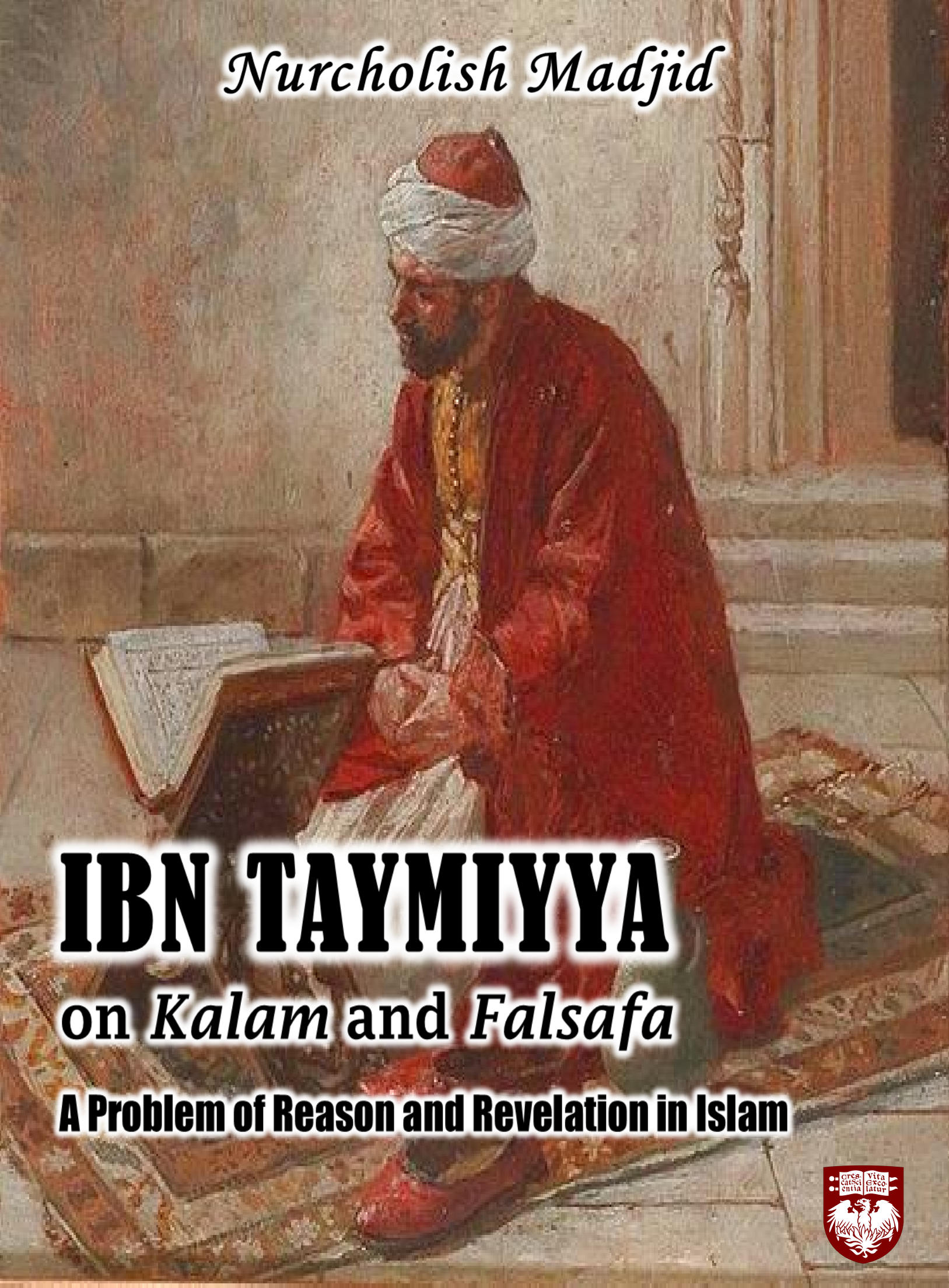

IBN TAYMIYYA

on *Kalam* and *Falsafa*

A Problem of Reason and Revelation in Islam

THE UNIVERSITY OF

CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

IBN TAYMIYYA ON KALĀM AND FALSAFA
(A PROBLEM OF REASON AND REVELATION IN ISLAM)

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BY

NURCHOLISH MADJID

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PREFACE

Ibn Taymiyya was a great figure in the history of Islam with many facets to his career. He was known to be a mujāhid (jihād-fighter) who was noted for his heroism in battles. He was also a mujtahid (ijtihād-performer) with great competence and prolific fatwās. Above all he has been generally acknowledged as a mujaddid (reformer) who made strenuous, incessant efforts to liberate the Muslims of his time from the yoke of uncritical adherence (taqlīd) to the religious establishments, and of bringing back Islam to its pristine, noble simplicity.

The present study has been motivated by an interest in Ibn Taymiyya as a reformer. The main purpose here is to seek a better understanding of the nature of his reform, especially as implied in his efforts to dismantle Islamic Hellenism, as represented by kalām and falsafa.

There have been some significant studies of Ibn Taymiyya. Henry Laoust is well-known for his monumental study of the social and political doctrines. His discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's methodology in Contribution a Une Etude de la Methodologie Canonique de Taḳi-d-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taimīya (1939) is of special relevance to the present thesis. But Laoust made it with particular reference only to Ibn Taymiyya's Maʿārij al-Wuṣūl and another work he wrote with his student, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, al-Qiyās fī al-Sharʿ al-Islāmī, and

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not other Ibn Taymiyya's theological and juristic works.

Valuable discussions of Ibn Taymiyya's critique of Hellenism are those by Sabih Ahmad Kamali in his Types of Islamic Thought (n.d.) and by Serajul Haque in his article, "Ibn Taymiyya" in M. M. Sharif, ed., A History of Muslim Philosophy (1963). Both discussions have a high degree of competence, but neither treats the basic methodology of Ibn Taymiyya sufficiently, and they are based on a rather limited number of his works.

This dissertation is an attempt to fill the gap. Even more, the humble ambition of the study is to try to present a more rounded view of Ibn Taymiyya, by systematically uncovering his methodology and exposing his critique of kalām and falsafa. His books Naqḍ al-Manṭiq, al-Radd ʿalā al-Manṭiqiyyīn, Bayān Muwāfaqat Ṣarīḥ al-Maʿqūl li Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl, Minhāj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya, and Maʿārij al-Wuṣūl are of special significance as references. Besides other works of Ibn Taymiyya, some secondary sources are also used.

In transliterating Arabic, the convention in the International Journal of Middle East Studies (Cambridge, England) is followed. Muhammad Asad's The Message of the Qur'ān is used in rendering the Qur'ānic verses, with some modifications.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, it is my honor and pleasant duty here to thank Professor Fazlur Rahman, my academic advisor. Without his guidance and motivation, this work would have been unimaginable.

My heartiest and special thanks, also, to Professors Jaroslav Stetkevytch and Robert Dankoff, the members of my committee, whose counsel and advice has been of great help.

Furthermore, this study would have been impossible without financial support from The Ford Foundation and The Asia Foundation, in cooperation with the Foundation of Social Sciences (YIIS) and the National Institute of Social and Economic Research (LEKNAS), back in Indonesia. I am grateful to them all beyond expression.

I deeply appreciate the understanding of my colleagues at LEKNAS in allowing me years of study leave abroad. My genuine gratitude is also due to my friends among the alumni of HMI (Muslim Students Association) in Jakarta. Their personal support and encouragement has been of tremendous help to me during these long years of study.

Finally, I acknowledge, with love, my wife, Omi Komaria, my daughter, Nadia, and my son, Ahmad Mikail, who have been my faithful, happy companions during these lonely years of study in a foreign country far, far away from home.

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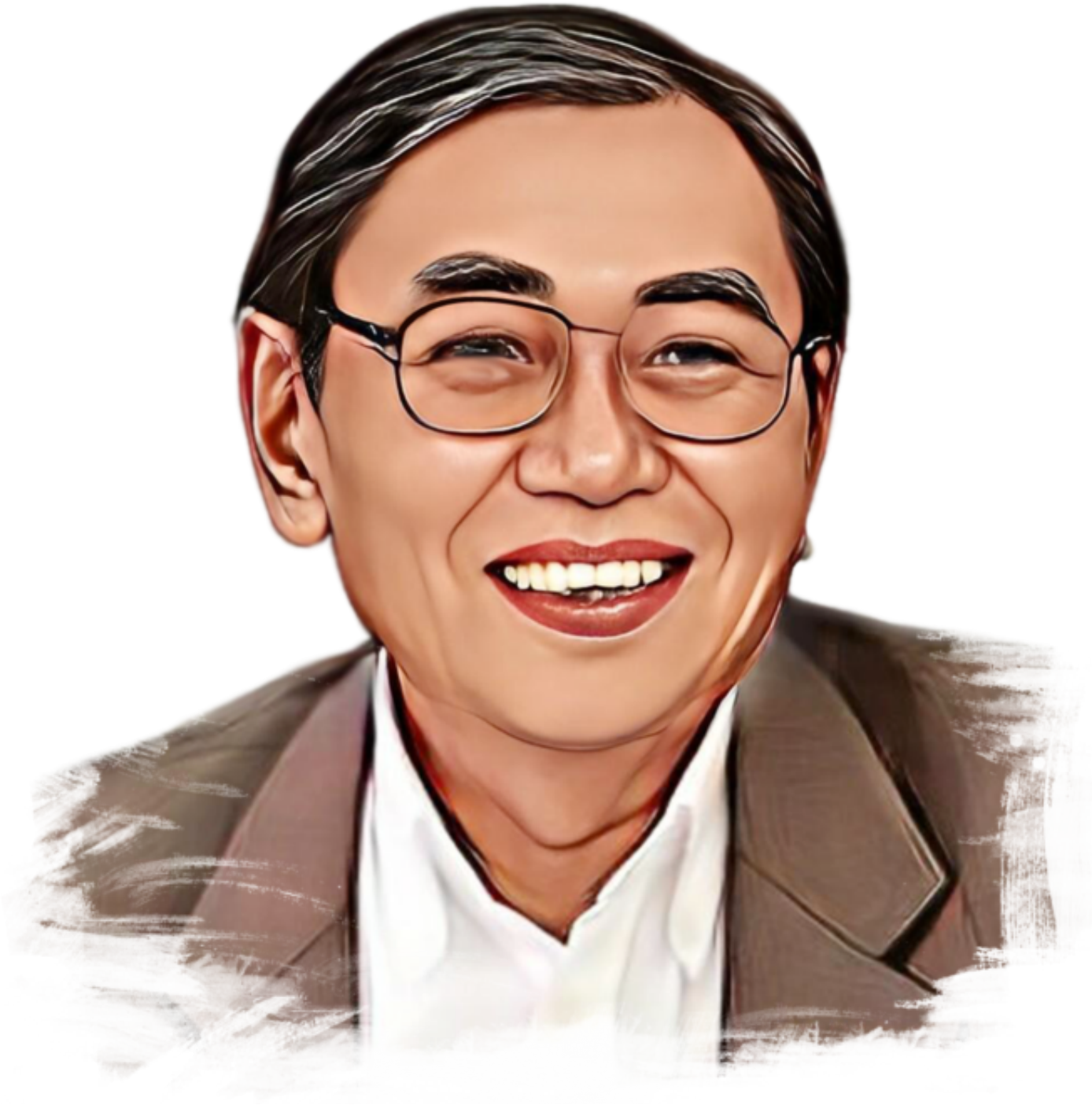

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Rise of Kalām and Falsafa.

In 127 A.H./734 C.E. a rebellion against the Umayyads broke out in Khurāsān in the name of the Qur'ān, the Sunna, and the principle of shūrā (consultation), led by al-Ḥārith ibn Surayj. Involved in the rebellion was Jahm ibn Ṣafwān, the eponym of the Jahmites (al-jahmiyya).[1] the disciple of Ja'd ibn Dirham who was known to be the first to declare the createdness of the Qur'ān during the reign of Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik (105-125 A.H.). Because of his doctrine, Ja'd was executed, but he left behind him the seeds of free and rationalistic discussion about religion based on Greek philosophy. His legacy was then to be cultivated further by Jahm ibn Ṣafwān, who also was executed in 129 A.H./746 C.E.[2]

The rebellion of al-Ḥārith in Khurāsān was a failure,

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[1]Abdus Subhan, "Al-Jahm bin Ṣafwān and His Philosophy," Islamic Culture (Hyderabad) 11 (April 1937):227. Cf. W. Montgomery Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology (Edinburgh: The University Press, paperback edition, 1979), p. 61. See also Marshall G. S. Hodgson, The Venture of Islam, 3 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:273.

[2]Subhan, "al-Jahm," p. 221. Cf. W. Montgomery Watt, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1973), p. 143.

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but Jahm ibn Ṣafwān, his chief propagandist, left behind him an after-effect of his religious views that was to develop into a distinctive school of thought. As Jahm was able to gain some political support for the cause of the rebels from the mass of the Muslims in the area,[1] he must also have had the opportunity to disseminate his doctrines. The term "Jahmites" (al-jahmiyya), as Watt puts it, is "purely vituperative, presumably meaning 'something like renegade' or 'quisling'." There never was anybody who actually followed Jahm or claimed to have done so, and we cannot say much about the theological opinions of Jahm himself.[2] But the views of a sect ascribed to him, the Jahmites, have been referred to very frequently, especially in the Ḥanbalite literature, in order to be refuted.[3] Jahm was reported to be the first to introduce the method of ta'wīl, the metaphorical interpretation which does not take the expressions of the Qur'ān and the Sunna in their literal meanings but into their secondary implications, more in line with reason. The method of ta'wīl was an important departure from the hitherto established doctrine, followed faithfully by the predecessors of Jahm, of accepting the letter of the sacred texts. Since Jahm found that some religious articles of faith are intellectu-

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[1]M.A. Shaban, The 'Abbāsid Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 136.

[2]Watt, Formative, p. 147. [3]Ibid., pp. 143-144.

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ally untenable, he refused to believe in such well-established elements of Islamic faith as the Prophet's mi'rāj (the bodily ascension to heaven), 'adhāb al-qabr (the punishment in the grave), the mīzān ("balance" in the hereafter for weighing human deeds), the ṣirāṭ (a bridge, extending over Hell, said to be thinner than a hair split into seven parts and sharper than a sword), and the eternity of Paradise and Hell.[1] Jahm also denied the attributes of God that co-exist with His essence, since these would make His essence composite (murakkab). Since the attribute of speaking (al-kalām) in its literal sense cannot be attributed to Him, Jahm declared, as his teacher Ibn Dirham had done before, that the Qur'ān is created.[2]

Jahm ibn Ṣafwān, as we have seen, lived in the last days of the Umayyads. By that time there had been enough opportunity for Muslims to associate with the non-Muslim circles in the empire, and, consequently, to have access to their rich cultural treasures. Most important among those non-Muslims were the bearers of ancient Greek learning who consisted of the Syrian Christians of Damascus itself, the Persians of Jundishapūr, the Sabeans of Ḥarrān, and the Copts of Alexandria. Although the translation movement did not proliferate until 'Abbāsid times, the effort itself,

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[1]Subhan, "al-Jahm," pp. 225-227. [2]Ibid., p. 222.

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according to Ibn al-Nadīm, had in fact been initiated by a certain Khālid ibn Yazīd (d. 84 A.H./704 C.E.), an Umayyad prince whose claim to the caliphate was rejected.[1]

Many Muslim thinkers, stumped by the Khārijite question of what a good Muslim is--a question which involved the problem of Jabarism and Qadarism--and inspired by the similar problem discussed in Christianity, now saw in Hellenism some useful tools that they could borrow to vindicate their own contentions. The new perspective eventually opened the door for rational discussions about religious matters, and with Jahm ibn Ṣafwān "we have the first clearly defined attempt to adapt an identifiable Greek philosophical system to an Islamic theology."[2]

In fact, Jahm's system was a theological formulation within Islam based on a Neo-Platonic model, although he never pretended to teach Muslims the wisdom of the Greeks (ḥikmat al-yūnān).[3] The most easily noticeable Neo-Platonism of the Jahmite system is its doctrine that God is not a "thing" (shay'). This was for him based on the Qur'ān 39:63, "God is the creator of everything," and 42:9, "Nothing is like Him."

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[1]Majid Fakhry, A History of Islamic Philosophy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 5.

[2]R. M. Frank, "The Neoplatonism of Ĝahm ibn Ṣafwān," Le Muséon (Louvain) 78 (1965):396.

[3]Ibid., pp. 396-397.

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Yet the Jahmite concept of "thing" was nevertheless a novelty in Islam, and it was clearly the earliest use of the term "shay'" in the technical sense of the term "being" in the Plotinian system.[1]

Another important Neo-Platonic element of Jahmism was its doctrine that God is infinite and indefinable.[2] This led the Jahmites to ta'ṭīl (denying attributes of God), as God is "absolute and beyond the grasp of reason which is perforce discursive and ordered to 'things'."[3]

The attempt by Jahm to interpret Islam along the lines of the Neo-Platonic model was a total failure, as Neo-Platonism was quite alien to Muslim minds.[4] But Jahmism paved the way for the following intellectual movement in Islam which was later to be specifically called "kalām" (or, in full, "ʿilm al-kalām"), a new branch of Islamic science usually ascribed to the Muʿtazilites, since the system of Jahm ibn Ṣafwān was the real precursor of Muʿtazilism. Indeed so great was the affinity between the Jahmites and the Mu'tazilites that, at least for some people like the Ḥanbalites, Jahmism and Muʿtalizilism are simply identical.[5]

The Mu'tazilites are often described as the "liberals",

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[1]Ibid., pp. 398-399.

[2]Ibid., p. 340.

[3]Ibid., p. 402.

[4]Ibid., p. 397.

[5]See Subhan, "al-Jahm," p. 227.

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the "rationalists" or the "free thinkers" of Islam, which seems not to have been exactly the case.[1] Nevertheless, the Mu'tazilites did keep for themselves the liberty to discuss certain sacred texts from the Qur'ān, and to declare that since the literal meanings of some of the texts are unacceptable to reason, those texts should be interpreted metaphorically, according to the ta'wīl method. Their contention implies that reason is superior to revelation, a theological view much resented by the traditionalists. But, at the same time, the Mu'tazilites, unlike the philosophers, refuted Greek philosophical doctrines if they saw them as religiously untenable. They selected from Hellenism only those elements which would suit their needs to support their contentions.[2] Theirs was a system imbued with Hellenism, yet still Islamic in spirit.[3] Basic to their arguments were the Qur'ānic premisses, which they elaborated by using Greek methods and sometimes formulated in Greek terminology.

There are some important aspects in which the Mu'tazilites fundamentally differed from the Jahmites, despite

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[1]See Fazlur Rahman, Islam (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, second edition, 1979), p. 88.

[2]Hammouda Ghoraba, "Al-Ash'ari's Method" The Islamic Quarterly (London) 1 (Safar 1374/October 1954):143.

[3]George Makdisi, "Ash'arī and the Ash'arites in Islamic Religious History," 2 parts, part 1 Studia Islamica (Paris) 17 (1962):51.

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their apparent affinity. While Jahm ibn Ṣafwān advocated absolute predeterminism, the Mu'tazilites, following the Khārijite doctrine, became the defenders of human freedom and responsibility. The Mu'tazilites were, in some sense, "the theological inheritors of the Khawārij," and their ideology was "bound to resurrect Khārijism."[1]

As the traditional opponents of the Umayyads, the Qadarites, and particularly the Mu'tazilites, the Khārijites and the Shī'ites were enthusiastic supporters of the 'Abbāsid revolution. After the success of the revolution, when the seat of the caliphate had been moved to Baghdad, the 'Abbāsids were more interested in keeping political stability and balance, denying the Khārijites and the Shī'ites full participation in the administration, since their ideologies might have become liabilities to the new regime. The 'Abbāsids, like the Umayyads whom they succeeded, were by now more inclined to the majority--that is, the Muslims at large loosely designated as the ahl al-jamā'a. Nevertheless, most Khārijites and Shī'ites "were at least willing to acknowledge the de facto success of the 'Abbāsid regime for the time being."[2]

The tacit legality of the Qadarites seems to have given

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[1]Fazlur Rahman, Islamic Methodology in History (Karachi: Central Islamic Research Institute, 1965), pp. 61-62.

[2]Hodgson, Venture, 1:291.

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them some freedom to express themselves. In addition, the ʿAbbāsids, despite their inclination towards the ahl al-jamāʿa, were more inclined towards the ideology of Qadarism than towards Jabarism, creating a more tolerant and pluralist intellectual atmosphere than had been the case under the Umayyads. As Muslims were in contact with more varied peoples and cultures, the social and cultural pluralism then became even more conspicuous. Besides the Christians with their Hellenism, new elements from Persianism, Hinduism and Buddhism were now added to the intellectual world of Islam. The result was obvious: a multiplicity of intellectual pursuits, and a diversity of schools of thought.

Kalām is a rational theology that originated from the need to defend a certain school of thought. The mutakallimūn (singular, mutakallim, cultivator of kalām science) were "the dialectical militias of the warring sects, skilled representatives of their communities in the war of words."[1]

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[1]Michael Cook, Early Muslim Dogma (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 157. It is interesting to note here the views of modern scholars on the origin of the name "kalām" (literally meaning "speech") for this branch of the traditional Islamic science. Quoting al-Shahrastānī, ʿAlī al-Shābī says that the term "kalām" first appeared during the reign of al-Maʾmūn (198-218 A.H./813-833 C.E.), created by the Muʿtazilites. He suggests that the reason for such naming was either because the most conspicuous question they discussed in it was centered around the problem of "speech" (kalām) as an attribute of God, or because of the comparability of the mutakallimūn to the falāsifa who called one of their science manṭiq (logic), and then they substituted "kalām" for "manṭiq", as the two words are synomymous. Al-Shābī

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Thus, kalām was originally apologetic in nature, serving one Muslim faction against another and against non-Muslims.[1]

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suggests also that another common name for ʿilm al-kalām is ʿilm al-tawḥīd (science of monotheism), because its main task is to establish the oneness (waḥda) of God. It is also called by various other names, as ʿilm uṣūl al-dīn (science of the principles of religion), ʿilm al-naẓar wa 'l-istidlāl (science of rational discussion and inference), and ʿilm al-maqālāt al-Islāmiyya (science of Islamic discussions). ʿAlī al-Shābī, Mabāḥith fī ʿIlm al-Kalām wa 'l-Falsafa (Tunis: Dār Būsalāma, 1977), pp. 11-12.

ʿAbduh also holds that ʿilm al-kalām is the same as ʿilm al-tawḥīd. He indicates that the use of the term kalām was either because the main topic of discussion in it was the problem whether the recited speech of God (kalām Allāh al-matluw, i.e., the Qur'ān) is created or eternal, or because the science is based on rational arguments that manifest themselves best in the speech of its cultivators, as they rarely refer to tradition (naql) except in the secondary derivations (al-furūʿ) after the establishment of the rational basis. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Risālat al-Tawḥīd," in Major Themes in Modern Arabic Thought: an Anthology, ed. Trevor J. Le Gassick (Ann Arbor: The Michigan University Press, 1979), Arabic text pp. 63-64.

Montgomery Watt, on the other hand, posits that the term "kalām" was "doubtless one time a nickname, perhaps suggesting people 'who are for ever talking'; but it came to be accepted as a neutral term." Watt, Formative pp. 182-183.

Another interesting view about the matter is that of Wolfson. Quoting Ibn Rushd, he maintains that kalām was "used in Arabic translations of the works of the Greek philosophers as a rendering of the term logos in its various senses of 'word,' 'reason,' and 'argument.'" Furthermore, Wolfson indicates that the term kalām means any special branch of learning, as it is obvious from the term al-kalām al-ṭabīʿī ("the physical kalām") and al-kalām al-ilāhī ("the divine kalām). Thus Muslims talk about "the kalām of Aristotle," "the Christian mutakallimūn," "the Jewish mutakallimūn," etc. Harry Austryn Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Kalam (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 1-2. However, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī used the term al-kalām much earlier in reference to discussion on human freedom and predetermination. Cf. Rahman, Islam, pp. 87-89.

[1]See al-Fārābī, Iḥṣā' al-ʿUlūm, ed. Osman Amine (Cairo: Maktaba al-Anjlū al-Miṣriyya, 1968), p. 131. Polemics with

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But despite their methodological novelty, the Mu'tazilites were still the captives of the Khārijite legacy of the problem of who is a good Muslim. Closer to the Khārijite principle, as has been suggested, the Mu'tazilites continued to advocate the ideology of human freedom and responsibility (al-qadariyya). In fact, for them, God's justice (ʿadl or ʿadāla) is conceivable only on the basis of man's ability to choose his own deeds, good or bad, since it would be an injustice (ẓulm) for God to punish a bad person, and it would be absurd for Him to reward a good person, if a person does not have power over his deeds. Since God is absolutely just and man is free to choose his own acts, it is incumbent upon God to fulfil His threat (al-waʿīd) to the criminals and His promise (al-waʿd) to the righteous. Now, it is the social duty of man to encourage goodness (al-amr bi 'l-maʿrūf) and prohibit evil (al-nahy ʾan al-munkar). But, differing from the Khārijites, the Mu'tazilites held the doctrine that a

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non-Muslims seems to have been rather frequent during the ʿAbbāsid period. Thus, for example, al-Naẓẓām is reported to have had controversy with the Jews about the abrogation of the Mosaic Law; Jaʿfar ibn Ḥarb was involved in a debate with a "dualist" just as Abū 'l-Hudhayl had arguments with an "infidel" in front of the caliph al-Maʾmūn; and al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868 C.E.), a Muʿtazilite, wrote a book, titled al-Radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā. Robert Brunschwig, "Muʿtazilisme et Aš'arisme a Bagdād" Arabica (Leiden) 9 (1962):349-350. Another Muslim thinker al-Warrāq (d. 861 C.E.) also wrote a work against the Christians, Kitāb fī al-Radd ʿalā al-Thalāth Firaq min al-Naṣārā. Michel Allard, "Les Chrétiens a Bagdād," Arabica (Leiden) 9 (1962):383.

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grave sinner is not a straight kāfir (infidel), but in a position between the two positions of being a believer and an infidel (fī manzila bayn al-manzilatayn). Furthermore, the Mu'tazilites claimed for themselves the title of the defenders of true monotheism (ahl al-tawḥīd), which seems to mean that they, like the Jahmites, were adherents of ta'ṭīl, the doctrine that denies the attributes of God.[1]

Mu'tazilism was born in the city of Baṣra, the confluence of various ethnic groups with distinctive cultural traditions and styles of life.[2] But in its heyday, Mu'tazilism

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[1]Rahman, Islam, p. 89. Hence the famous five Mu'tazilite principles: al-tawḥīd, al-'adāla, al-wa'd wa 'l-wa'īd, al-amr bi 'l-ma'rūf wa 'l-nahy 'an al-munkar, and al-manzila bayn al-manzilatayn. See also Watt, Philosophy, pp. 66-68.

[2]Brunschvig, "Mu'tazilisme," p. 345. The Sunnite tradition has it that Mu'tazilism was born when one day, while giving a lecture in one of the mosques of Baṣra, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was interrupted by a question about the grave sinner. But before Ḥasan had finished with his answer, one of his students, Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā' (80-132 A.H./699-749 C.E.), interrupted him, declaring that he did not accept the view that a grave sinner is an infidel, as the Khārijites held, but in a position between being an infidel and a believer. Wāṣil, as tradition continues to say, then seceded from his teacher's circle (ḥalaqa), upon which Ḥasan said: "He secedes (i'tazala) from us," which was the origination of the brand Mu'tazila (Seceders) for his group.

For certain reasons, modern scholars do not accept the story, although indeed the fact that the Mu'tazilites broke away from Ḥasan brought a very important consequence in the course of Islamic theology. Rahman suggests that the name "Mu'tazila" was given to those particular group of Muslims apparently because of their view of al-manzila bayn al-manzilatain, a deviation from the then feuding doctrines. (It is also interesting to note that, according to Rahman, the name "Mu'tazila" had been given to the Murji'a of the early period who were political neutralists between 'Alī and his

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was mainly the product of Baghdad, "the brilliant, enlightened, commercial, cosmopolitan, and spirited" capital of the of the ʿAbbāsids.[1] During the reign of al-Maʾmūn (ibn Hārūn al-Rashīd), Muʿtazilism was even promoted to the position of the official ideology, and the Muʿtazilites were given important positions in the administration. Al-Maʾmūn even launched the infamous miḥna (inquisition) to examine the theological view of his officials and other leading personalities, persecuting those who did not adhere to the doctrine of the Muʿtazilites--for example, the createdness of the Qurʾān.[2] Reputed to be a lover of knowledge himself, al-Maʾmūn, as caliph, generously sponsored the task of translating the Greek works into Arabic by instituting the "House of Wisdom" (Bayt al-Ḥikma), where scholars of all shades of faith and opinion work together in great freedom.[3]

As has been suggested, the most important transmitters of Greek learning to the Muslim Arabs were the Syriac-speak-

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opponents). And as far as Muʿtazilism as a theological system is concerned, the real founders, according to Montgomery Watt, were Muʿammar (or Maʿmar), Abū al-Hudhayl, and al-Naẓẓām at Baṣra and Bishr ibn al-Muʿtamir at Baghdad. Watt, Philosophy, pp. 58 and 60; Rahman, Islam, pp. 86-88.

[1]Brunschvig, "Muʿtazilisme," p. 345.

[2]Watt, Philosophy, p. 62.

[3]Armand Abel, "La Legende de Jean Philopon chez les Arabes," Acta Orientalia Belgica (Brussel) 10 (May 31, 1963-June 1-2, 1964):268.

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ing Christians "whose Christianity related back to Hellenism through the Greek Fathers and whose Syriac language and Semitic culture made them ideal translators for their Arab cousins."[1] But the Muslims also sought the classical texts directly from Constantinople, which as the Byzantine capital was thought to be the treasure-house of Hellenism at that time. Hārūn al-Rashīd, for example, usually required his ambassadors to the Emperor to come back with as many Greek manuscripts as they could buy. The Emperor discovered that the presents the ʿAbbāsids appreciated most highly were Greek classical works on sciences.

There were also scholars sent by the Emperor from Constantinople to Baghdād to participate in the Greek movement in Islam. One of them was the famous Photius, a prominent Christian philosopher who came to the Caliph's court as ambassador. Photius seems to have learned Arabic and made many Muslim friends. At that time, the Byzantines found that the Muslims learned from them more than they taught them. The pattern was reversed only after the Muslims developed the Hellenic heritage with various other ingredients.[2]

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[1]Francis E. Peters, Aristotle and the Arabs (New York: New York University Press, 1968), p. xviii.

[2]Sir Steven Runciman, "Constantinople and Baghdad: Cultural Relations," in East and West, Today and Yesterday, ed. Sir Steven Runciman (Kent, England: The Institute for Cultural Research, 1978), p. 13.

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Among the ancient Greek thinkers, Aristotle was the most admired by Muslims, a fact that made him exalted as "the first teacher" (al-mu'allim al-awwal). The wholly new disciplines that Muslims appreciated most highly were logic, biology, and mathematical geography. Furthermore, as a purely philosophical discipline, Aristotelianism tremendously proliferated among Muslims, providing them with "a view of intellectual history and a sense of direct connection with Hellenic antiquity." Now a peculiarly Islamic version of Hellenism was formed, known as falsafa, an Arabized Greek term, and supported by the falāsifa (al-falāsifa, singular, al-failasūf, the philosopher).[1]

But it was not merely Aristotle's thought which attracted the Muslims. As has been suggested, the Muslims were particularly appreciative of logic, biology, and mathematical geography. Aristotle's book Metaphysica, considered to be his "greatest venture into the realm of speculative thought," had been translated into Arabic as early as the middle of ninth century C.E., yet it did not have a direct impact on Islamic thinking.[2] The Hellenic works which influenced the Muslims most were, instead, the Theologia Aristotelis and Fī al-Khayr al-Maḥḍ (translated into Latin as Li-

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[1]Peters, Aristotle, p. xxi.

[2]Fakhry, Philosophy, p. 19.

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ber de Causis), both of which "are enormously remote from the genuine teaching of Aristotle." Despite its name, the first book was only erroneously ascribed to Aristotle. It was a paraphrase of the last three books of Enneads by Plotinus (205-270 C.E.). The second book, whose original is known only in Arabic and which is thought to be derived from the "Elements of Theology" of Proclus, was also circulating under the name of Aristotle, but no one could be sure who was the real author. It must have been someone who was either a Muslim, a Jew, or a Christian who spoke Arabic. But, in any case, Theologia Aristotelis and Fī al-Khayr al-Maḥḍ are known to have been the major sources of the emanationist world-view to which almost every failasūf of Islam adhered.[1]

Among the ancient Neo-Platonists, Plotinus was crucially important for the Muslim falāsifa. He is said to have been the one who "sought a fusion of Greece with the Orient", an effort which was "necessarily and appropriately bequeathed to the later Muslim outlook."[2] Plotinus is, therefore, considered to have been "the founder of the very type of Platonism that consistently shows itself in the system of

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[1]Fakhry, Philosophy, pp. 19-20 and 27; Sheikh, Philosophy, p. 24. Cf. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1972, s.v. "Liber de Causis" by Michael W. Strasser. Cf. also Allard, "Rationalisme," pp. 26-27.

[2]Max Horton, "The System of Islamic Philosophy in Detail," Islamic Studies (Islamabad) 12 (September 1973):197.

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the Islamic falsafah," and he was known to Muslim falāsifa as "the Greek Master" (al-shaykh al-yūnānī).[1] Ibn Rushd has been acclaimed as not only thorough but successful in purging Neo-Platonism from Aristotle. Yet his system still contains some elements of Plotinian doctrine, such as the identification of the Aristotelian prime mover with God and the intellectualization of the Aristotelian hierarchy of celestial bodies.[2]

Another great Neo-Platonist with perceptible impact on Islamic thought was John Philoponus (John the Grammarian, Yaḥyā al-Naḥwī), a Jacobite philosopher of Alexandria. Philoponus' influence is especially important in the Islamic science of kalām. The standard kalām proof for creation from the theory of accidents (a'rāḍ) and the impossibility of an infinite regress can be traced back to Philoponus, as it was "a reformulation of one of Philoponus' arguments."[3]

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[1]Francis E. Peters, "The Origin of Islamic Platonism: the School Tradition," in Islamic Philosophical Theology, ed. Parwiz Morewedge (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), p. 16.

[2]David Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 200.

[3]Herbert A. Davidson, "John Philoponus as a Source of Medieval Islamic and Jewish Proofs of Creation," The Journal of the American Oriental Society 89 (1969):357. Cf. Harry Austryn Wolfson, "The Kalam Arguments for Creation in Saadia, Averroes, Maimonides, and St. Thomas," The American Academy of Jewish Research, Saadia anniversary volume (1943): 197-198.

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Alexander of Aphrodisias is also mentioned as one of the most important sources of Islamic Neo-Platonism. His influence upon Islamic thinking may not have been so great as that of Plotinus and John Philoponus, and yet he left a durable mark on the cosmology of the falāsifa concerning the concept of universal intellects, particularly as it is found in the system of al-Fārābī and his followers.[1]

We have seen how Jahm ibn Ṣafwān came forward with the argument that God is not a "thing" (shay'), which was a Neo-Platonic argument borrowed in one way or another from Philoponus. Furthermore, there are nine standard kalām arguments to prove the createdness of the world and the creatorness of God, all of which are in some sense Neo-Platonic. They are proofs from finitude (nihāya), composition (tarkīb), accidents (a'rāḍ), generation (tawallud), movement of celestial bodies (ḥarakat ajrām al-samā'), analogy (qiyās), determination (takhṣīṣ), and preference (tarjīḥ).[2] The arguments were followed and developed to their limits by such

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[1]Some philosophical works of Alexander of Aphrodisias were among the earliest Greek classics to be translated into Arabic. Abū 'Uthmān al-Dimshaqī and Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq were mentioned as the translators. One of the works was then elaborated by al-Fārābī. See Helmut Gätje, "Zur Arabischen Überlieferung des Alexander von Aphrodisias," Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft (Wiesbaden) 116 (1966): 260. Cf. Josef van Ess, "Über einige neue Fragmente des Alexander von Aphrodisias und des Proklos in arabischer Übersetzung," Der Islam (Berlin) 42 (1966):165.

[2]See Wolfson, "Kalam Arguments," p. 199.

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great mutakallimūn as al-Bāqillānī (d. 1023 C.E.), al-Juwaynī (d. 1085 C.E.), and al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153 C.E.). There is every indication that all of these arguments were derived from Yaḥyā al-Naḥwī, who was the ultimate source of at least the argument from accidents.[1]

Despite the high visibility of Neo-Platonism, kalām never completely lost its Aristotelian traits. Peters says that Aristotelianism as a purely philosophical discipline was an exotic growth in Islam. The Arabs were not aware of the "contaminations of Neoplatonism" in their falsafa, and yet they were "chiefly Aristotelian."[2] Aristotelianism remained the chief source for Muslims which provided them with theoretical foundation for their kalām as speculative theology, as kalām was indeed "erected on a scholastic, Aristotelian methodology and organized along the line of distinctively Hellenic-Patristic problems."[3] Horton says that a pure Aristotelianism was unknown to Muslims. Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, the "two masters" (al-shaykhān) were Neo-Platonists, yet the building blocks of their falsafa were "genuinely Aristotelian."[4] For example, the kalām argument of accidents in its full elaboration belonged ultimately to Phi-

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[1]See Davidson, "John Philoponus," pp. 382-391.

[2]Peters, Aristotle, p. xxiii. [3]Ibid., p. xxi.

[4]Horton, "Islamic Philosophy in Detail," p. 198.

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loponus, but Philoponus, in turn, took its materials from Aristotle, especially in its relation to the argument of the impossibility of an infinite series of causes and effects. Aristotle saw the structure of the universe as a necessary thing (wājib). But the mutakallimūn said that everything in the world is only of contingent (mumkin) nature, not necessary, as it was created by God through His decision. And yet the very concepts of "necessary" and "possible" are still essentially Aristotelian.[1]

Because of the Hellenism of the Islamic kalām and the Islamism of the Hellenic falsafa, boundaries between the two disciplines often cannot be clearly drawn. The Hellenism of both kalām and falsafa was so pervasive that many Greek concepts formed their common world view and made "the matrix for so many otherwise distinctively different movements." At the same time, falsafa was no less theistic than kalām.[2]

Still there are some important identifiable points that significantly distinguish kalām from falsafa. In any case, kalām was initially "a theological reaction against some of the rationalistic and deterministic elements of Greek philosophy that had begun to influence Islamic life and thought," as kalām "rejected any attempt to view nature as

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[1]Wolfson, "Kalam Argument," p. 234.

[2]Horton, "Islamic Philosophy in Detail," p. 194.

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a closed, eternal, and necessary system or to view God as limited by human concepts of justice or by human freewill."[1]

To put it simply, both kalām and falsafa are Qur'ānic as well as Hellenic, except that kalām is more Qur'ānic than Hellenic, while falsafa is the reverse. Thus, the failasūf Ibn Sīnā (d. 430 A.H./1037 C.E.), for example, was a Muslim who tried to make conciliation between the Qur'ānic principles and their philosophical conclusions.[2] Even more impressive was the effort of Ibn Rushd (d. 594 A.H./1198 C.E.). Some people accused Ibn Rushd of advocating a "double truth" theory, the religious and the philosophical. But, upon close examination, such accusation appears groundless. What Ibn Rushd did was to show that religion and philosophy are manifestations of one and the same truth from God the Almighty; only that the capacity to comprehend the truth is different from one man to another, and each has to understand the truth according to his ability. The elect (al-khawāṣṣ) have the duty to understand the essence of the truth which for them always manifests itself in philosophical formulations, while the commoners (al-ʿawāmm) should be content with the

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[1]William J. Courtenay, "The Critique of Natural Causality in the Mutakallimūn and Nominalism," The Harvard Theological Review 66 (1973):77.

[2]Michel Allard, "Le Rationalisme d'Averroes d'apres une Etude sur la Création," Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales (Damascus) 14 (1952-1954):14.

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allegorical expressions of the truth in the form of symbolic religions. He criticized al-Ghazālī for having made available to the masses the two methods at once, neglecting the difference between the elites and the laymen.[1]

Despite their religious affirmativeness, the falāsifa were predominently rationalistic. Even when al-Kindī (d. ca. 153 A.H./870 C.E.) wrote a treatise to prove the oneness of God (al-tawḥīd, the kernel of Islamic teaching), refuting the Aristotelian doctrine of the world's eternity, his arguments were out-and-out Hellenic.[2] And Ibn Sīnā, despite his admission that the universe by its own nature is only contingent (mumkin), maintained the eternity of the world's existence.[3] The view, as has been discussed, is Aristotelian, and logically follows from the Aristotelian doctrine of God as Prime Mover (al-muḥarrik al-awwal) or First Cause (al-sabab al-awwal), who of necessity brought about the existence of the universe, instead of the view that God is the creator (al-khāliq, al-bāri', or al-badī') who created the world

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[1]See the discussion of the problem in Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Rushd, Faṣl al-Maqāl wa Taqrīr mā bayn al-Ḥikma wa 'l-Sharī'a min al-Ittiṣāl, ed. Muḥammad 'Īmāra (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1972), pp. 44-54. Cf. Allard, "Rationalisme," p. 15.

[2]See Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī, Risāla fī Waḥdāniyyat Allāh wa Tanāhī Jirm al-'Alam, in Rasā'il al-Kindī al-Falsafiyya, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī Abū Rīda (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1369/1950), pp. 201-207.

[3]Wolfson, "Kalam Argument," p. 235.

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consciously out of nothing (min al-ʿadam, min lā shayʾ, ex nihilo) and at a definite time in the past (the world has a beginning). The necessity of the world has made it coeval with its cause, God, and, therefore, the world is eternal.[1]

The Hellenism of the falāsifa is greatly emphasized by the position of formal logic. Although it remained alien to the practical preoccupation of sciences, yet, as Arnaldez puts it, logic formed "the key to the vault of the falsafa."[2] The crucial position of formal logic is well reflected in many of Ibn Sīnā's works, as logic "encompasses almost the same scope as the natural sciences." The salience of logic is the testimony that Islamic Hellenism was immersed in the task of introducing clarity into its concepts, as the dominant goal of its endeavours was "not to observe and assimilate reality, but rather to analyze and belabour a specific and very limited material field of observation." To their credit, however, the Muslim falāsifa introduced many innovations into Greek logic.[3] Yet one cannot help but be surprised to find such a lofty exaltation of formal logic by the falāsifa that Ibn Rushd, for example, said that one

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[1]Allard, "Rationalisme," p. 29.

[2]Roger Arnaldez, "Science et Philosophie dans la Civilization de Bagdād sous les Premiers ʿAbbāsides," Arabica (Leiden) 9 (1962):367.

[3]Horton, "Islamic Philosophy in Detail," p. 202.

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would not attain future happiness without it, and felt pity that Socrates and Plato had not known the art.[1] Even al-Ghazālī, the one who tried to destroy the falāsifa, still held that one is not reliable in his knowledge and argumentation unless he knows the art of al-manṭiq (logic). For him, the relationship between syllogism and rational arguments is the same as the relationsip between prosody (al-ʿarūḍ) to poetry, or grammar to language.[2]

For some people, logic--particularly as theory of apodeictic argument--is simply identical with falsafa, since falsafa or ḥikma is, as defined by Ibn Rushd, "the profound knowledge by way of demonstration," and demonstration is "the most perfect form of speculation using the most perfect form of syllogism" from al-manṭiq.[3]

Ahl al-Sunna and Ḥanbalism.

The Muslim world today is roughly divided between the large Sunnite majority and the Shīʿite minority, leading to a popular conception that Sunnism is simply the opposite of Shīʿism. Although there are certain basic truths in this

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[1]Sheikh, Philosophy, p. 132.

[2]Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, Miʿyār al-ʿIlm fī Fann al-Manṭiq, ed. Ḥusyan Sharārah (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1964), p. 31.

[3]Allard, "Le Rationalisme," p. 16.

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view, the growth of Sunnism, it should be kept in mind, was only very gradual, as against the very early and almost spontaneous naissance of Shī'ism, which grew out of loyalism to the party (shī'a) of 'Alī against others, especially Mu'āwiya. Thus to embrace Shī'ism (tashayyu') always has meant to become the partisan of 'Alī, but to adhere to Sunnism (tasannun) does not necessarily mean to support Mu'āwiya. It means simply to belong to the majority of Muslims loosely identified as the Sunnites.

The consolidation of Sunnism is known to have been a "complex process, which is perhaps best described as the extension of areas of agreement" among various factions in Islam.[1] Sunnism, then, was, and still is, an amalgam of multifarious religious trends and ideological inclinations in Islam that have learned to tolerate each other and have adopted a kind of internal relativism.

Although Sunnism was not directly related to the opponents of 'Alī and his party, there was some relationship between Sunnism and the Umayyad regime in general. The earliest form of the Sunnite phenomenon was the political neutralism pursued particularly by the Medinese under the leadership of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar. The phenomenon started when the Medinese, in the times of the Successors, adhered to a

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[1]W. Montgomery Watt, The Majesty that was Islam (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1976), p. 175.

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kind of Jabarism (God's constraint) in their judgment of the tragic phases of Islamic history, the fitna wars. It seems that passive Jabarism was a theological necessity of their neutralism, which was then compounded with the doctrine of irjā' (postponement of judgment until the day of Resurrection),[1] especially as far as ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, the two Companions most deeply involved in the fitna, were concerned. By adhering to irjā', the neutralists "showed their concern for the unity of all Muslims," winding up with the ideology

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[1]The ideology of irjā' (verbal noun of the fourth form arja'a, to postpone) is supposedly based on the Qur'ānic verse (9:106), "And [there are yet] others--[people whose cases are] postponed (murjawn) until God wills to judge them. He will either chastise them or turn again unto them in His mercy--fo God is all-knowing, wise." The occasion of the revelation is said to have been that three men, without any clear reason, refused to join the Prophet in his expedition against Tabuk in 631, and the people had disagreed among themselves how to judge them until the verse was revealed. A possible and even immediate interpretation of the verse is that there should always be a reservation in making judgment about a person who is (externally) a believer concerning his act that appears to be against the command of God (a sin), keeping in mind the probability that such a person has a justifiable motive deep in his conscience which only God knows. In a social milieu with a traumatic historical experience like the Muslims during and immediately after the fitna wars involving the great Companions of the Prophet, the ideology of irjā' seems to be the viable solution. And in such psychological and social conditions, the Qur'ānic verse of irjā' was most probably associated with some other verses that stress the prerogative of God in judging individual's acts--for example, 3:126, "Unto God belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth: He forgives whom He wills, and He chastises whom He wills; and God is the much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace." This would explain the almost consistent accompaniment of irjā' with the ideology of Jabarism.

Watt suggests other problems and difficulties concern-

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of jamā'a. In any case, the Murji'ites (the adherents of irjā'), repelled by the Khārijite arguments, allowed the benefit of the doubt for those involved in the fitna, insisting that what counted most was the inner conscience of the individuals concerned, which only God knows and could rightly judge.[1]

The Murji'ite trend was historically very important in the evolution of Islamic thought, as Murji'ism, to a great extent, was the early form and predecessor of Sunnism. Or, after its modification "through making some sort of a distinction between Islam and Imān," Murji'ism came, in course of time, "to constitute an essential factor of orthodoxy, i.e., the beliefs of the majority of the Community,"

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ing the terms Murji'ites that arose from the fact that the term "murji'a", as collective noun, seems to have been a nickname used by different people with different meaning. One of the meanings different from the above is that the word "murji'a" may stem from the word irjā' not as the verbal noun of arja'a, but, instead, of arjā, to cause to hope, implying a hope for God's forgiveness for a sinner. There is also suggestion that, in relation with the first fitna war, irjā' means "to delay", i.e., to delay the position of 'Alī until after Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān. Makdisi indicates another usage of the term as equivalent to the terms tafwīḍ and imrār, signifying a theological vision that leaves the real meaning of the sacred texts to God and "let them pass on intact as they were handed down." Obviously, irjā' in the last sense is the antonym of ta'wīl, the metaphorical interpretation of the scripture. Watt, Majesty, pp. 69-70; Makdisi, "Ash'arī," Part 1, p. 51.

[1]Ibid., pp. 69-70; Rahman, Islam, p. 86; Hodgson, Venture, 1:264.

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ahl al-sunna wa 'l-jamā'a, the Jamā'ī-Sunnī Islam.[1]

The neutralists eventually accepted the de facto Umayyad rule, but reserved for themselves the right to criticize the government whenever necessary. The Umayyads, on the other hand, quite wisely chose to be tolerant, often sympathetic, to the neutralists, and appropriately took over their aspiration of jamā'a, "the moral and political unity of all Arabs under the aegis of Islam."[2] As the ideology of jamā'a ended up with "recognizing the validity of the general community experience however imperfect the community might sometimes be," it became characteristic of the ahl al-jamā'a to accept the religious authority of the Companions indiscriminately, assuming away the theological implications of the fitna wars.[3] The symbiotic relationship between the neutralists and the Umayyad regime resulted in the ever-strengthened position of Jamā'ism, and gradually it developed in Islam moderation and internal tolerance in matters doctrinal, as is quite evident in the doctrine of the mutually valid madhhabs of fiqh.

Medina continued to play the role as the center of the inherited knowledge. As the City of the Prophet, Medina enjoyed a cultural homogeneity represented by the Companions

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[1]Watt, "Islamic Sects," p. 86; Idem, Majesty, p. 71; Rahman, Methodology, p. 60.

[2]Hodgson, Venture, 1:246.

[3]Ibid., 1:276.

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who retained the Prophetic traditions, much of which was the reformed and Islamized old Arab customary practice (sunna).[1] Muslims looked at the Medinese culture and way of life not primarily as Arabian, but as pristinely Islamic, norms.[2]

But Medina did not stand alone. Every Muslim center, as Damascus, Baṣra, and Kūfa, had its customary practices which seem to have gone back just as clearly to the first Muslim generation. Efforts were then made to trace back and prove the authenticity of local practices to the traditions of the previous generations. Eventually, more important than the local practices were the collected reports about the lives of the Ancients (Salaf), particularly of the Prophet himself, but also of the Companions and the Successors. The task of collecting those reports produced a new science in Islam, the science of reports (ʿilm al-ḥadīth).[3]

With all the historical obscurities as to how precisely the term Sunnites (ahl al-sunna) began to be used in the present-day sense, it is by itself short for ahl al-sunna wa 'l-jamāʿa, a term that was first adopted by a faction who accepted ʿAbbāsid rule but stressed their doctrinal continuity with what had been during the Umayyad. By that time the faction began to show a special interest in the tradition of

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[1]Ibid., 1:324. [2]Ibid., 1:252.

[3]Ibid., 1:324. Cf. Makdisi, "Ashʿarī," Part 1, p. 49.

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the Salaf, hence the appropriateness of their claim that they were Sunnites. But, politically, the Sunnites did not make much innovation in what had been the view of the majority. It was in this phase of development that the short term ahl al-sunna eventually signified the acceptance of the jamā'a ideology, set over against the ideology of the Shī-'ites.[1]

Within the inclusivistic spirit of Jamā'ism, it is clear that originally the term sunna was not limited to the Prophetic Traditions only, but encompassed also the traditions of the Companions and the Followers. Hence the equivalence of the term sunna to, and its combination with, the term "āthār" (trails). The Ḥanbalites were among the ahl al-sunna wa 'l-jamā'a who stressed the religious authority not only of the sunna but of the āthār as well. Ibn Ḥanbal even called his group, in one of his works, the ahl al-sunna wa 'l-jamā'a wa 'l-āthār.[2]

It has now been universally accepted to see the Sunnites as those who adhere to one of the four "orthodox" fiqh-madhhabs (schools): the Mālikite, the Ḥanafite, the Shāfi'ite, and the Ḥanbalite. But, in reality, Ḥanbalism is in many ways different in nature and spirit from the other

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[1]Hodgson, Venture, 1:278.

[2]Watt, "Islamic Sects," pp. 89-90.

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three madhhabs. When ahl al-sunna wa 'l-jamā'a recognized the mutual validity of the four madhhabs--despite their differences, even opposition, to each other--they also declared that the gate of individual inquiry (ijtihād) in religious matters was closed, advising people to be faithful followers (muqallid) of the established schools. But the Ḥanbalites stood by themselves to advocate the ever-open gate of ijtihād, allowing anyone who is competent to freely start afresh according to the needs of his place and time. Moreover, Ḥanbalism, in fact, had never really been primarily a school of fiqh at all. It remained a comprehensive and essentially radical movement with its own distinctive Weltanschauung.[1]

As a comprehensive and radical movement, Ḥanbalism continued to evolve into a fanatical ideology with intolerant attitudes towards other persuasions. The source of its vigilance was its doctrine that moral activity is the necessary consequence of faith.[2] Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 A.H./ 855 C.E.) was very critical of Murji'ism as it developed in his time, since such political pacifism could lead to moral passivity. Indeed Murji'ism had begun to be accused of downplaying sinfulness and of lacking moral earnestness.[3]

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[1]Hodgson, Venture, 3:160.

[2]Watt, "Islamic Sects," p. 87.

[3]Watt, Majesty, p. 71; Fazlur Rahman, "The Post-Forma-

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But, despite their religious and moral radicalism, the Ḥanbalites, true to their Sunnism, were still more accommodating to the ʿAbbāsid regime compared with some other Islamic factions, particularly the Khārijites and the Shīʿites. In fact the Ḥanbalites did not care much who possessed political power, as long as he observed the religious duties, preserving the sunna and keeping away from bidʿa. But, because of his rigid formalism, Ibn Ḥanbal, contrary to most of the Muslims, considered Muʿāwiya, being a Companion, to be "a hundred times superior to ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz," the caliph generally regarded as the fifth of the rightly-guided caliphs (al-khulafāʾ al-rāshidūn). This was not to compare Muʿāwiya with any of the ʿAbbāsid caliph. But Ibn Ḥanbal ranked the ʿAbbāsid al-Mutawakkil as the same with ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz "for their services to the cause of Sunnah." Repeating the old irjāʾ doctrine, Ibn Ḥanbal said that he was not in authority to make judgment on ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya and other Companions. He even indicated the possibility that there had been a disguised wisdom (ḥikma) of God about the Prophet's Companions involved in the fitna wars.[1]

The Ḥanbalites have been known for their sensitivity to

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tive Development in Islam," Islamic Studies (Karachi) 1 (December 1962):3.

[1]Ziauddin Ahmed, "Some Aspects of the Political Theology of Aḥmad B. Ḥanbal," Islamic Studies (Islamabad) 12 (March 1973):55 and 61.

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any form of religious rationalism. For them the true religious discussion should arise only from the Holy Book and the Sunna, and any form of rationalism is bid'a. Thus, when Jahmism, for example, had been in its early stage of development, it did not hold immediate attention except from the Ḥanbalites.[1] Ibn Ḥanbal was particularly disturbed by Jahm's doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'ān, based on the thesis that "God was not speaking until he had created Himself speech. . . ."[2] Ibn Ḥanbal flatly rejected the thesis, since for him the true belief about the Qur'ān was

> God's fixed and paradigmatic and creative foreknowledge as eternally articulated in His Word, which, in God, is the ground at once of the existence and of the truth and intelligibility of all being, and on the other hand, the revelation by its creator--and so the accessibility to man--of some portion of this eternal word itself.[3]

Because of their emphatic traditionalism and strongly literal understanding of the scriptural texts, and due to their extreme resistance to the rationalism of kalām and falsafa, the Ḥanbalites earned a reputation for being "ultra-conservatives," "extreme literalists," "crass anthropomorphists," and even "die-hards." They were also accused of being al-ḥashwiyya ("stuffed with rubbish", because of their alleged irrationality). This was mainly because of their

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[1]Frank, "Ĝahm ibn Ṣafwān," p. 397.

[2]Ibid., p. 417.

[3]Ibid., p. 423.

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persistent rejection of "foreign knowledge" to the materials and methodology of religion.[1]

As spearheads of the traditionalists, the Ḥanbalites were opposed to virtually every Islamic faction, particularly those with rationalistic inclinations, the mutakallimūn and the falāsifa. Because of his religious stance, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was also unavoidably confronted with the ruling class who happened to have patronized a particular ideology--in this case, Mu'tazilism. His doctrine of the uncreatedness of the Qur'ān caused him to be persecuted under the miḥna (inquisition). He bravely faced the persecution, survived the miḥna, and was hailed as hero by the subsequent traditionalists. But his version of Sunnism and conservativism continued to fight a losing battle, and his school, although it remained vital, dwindled to the position of a small minority among the Muslim peoples of the world.[2]

Just as in fiqh (jurisprudence) Sunnism eventually became identical with the four madhhabs, in its theological orientation it began to be more and more identified with the doctrines of al-Ash'arī. The development and the final triumph of Ash'arism is known to be long, complex, and tedious.

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[1]Max Horton, "The System of Islamic Philosophy in General," Islamic Studies (Islamabad) 12 (March 1973):4 and 22. See also Subhan, "al-Jahm," p. 224.

[2]Makdisi, "Ash'arī," Part 1, pp. 58-59.

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Ash'arism began with the eponym, Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (260-324 A.H./873-935 C.E.), a descendant of the famous Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī. He was born at Baṣra and grew up as a Mu'tazilite. He was a student of the great Mu'tazilite doctor, Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī (also known as Abū Hāshim). When he was forty years of age, he left Mu'tazilism to launch his own school of theology. His was a moderate course between Mu'tazilite rationalism and Ḥanbalite traditionalism, using reason (_'aql_) in the light of tradition (_naql_).[1]

In spite of its attractiveness and apparent plausibility, such a middle road turned out to be difficult. Problems cropped up one after another, such as the relationships between reason and revelation, and intellect and tradition. Does intellect control tradition, as in Mu'tazilism, or does tradition control intellect, as in Ḥanbalism? If neither is correct, and the position of tradition and reason is the same, how is this to be formulated and realized? Is it not the case that, in practice, sometimes tradition is above reason, and sometimes the reverse? These difficult problems became the sources of Ash'arite dilemmas.[2]

Because of his methodological dualism, al-Ash'arī was accused of having a "double" or "split" personality [3] In-

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[1]Ghoraba, "al-Ash'arī's Method," p. 143.

[2]Ibid., 143. [3]Makdisi, "Ash'arī," Part 1, p. 43.

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deed, his dualism was reflected in some of his works. His Istiḥsān al-Kahwḍ fī ʿIlm al-Kalām (Recommendation for the Depth-study of the Science of Kalām) was a treatise advocating a theology based on rationalism and even Hellenism. But, on the other hand, his Ibāna (Clarification) was a book on theology which was plainly Ḥanbalite.[1] Because of his Istiḥsān, al-Ashʿarī was resented by the Ḥanbalites who claimed that he relegated Sunna to the service of kalām rationalism.[2] Even compared with the Muʾtazilites, the arch-enemy of the Ḥanbalites, the Ashʿarites received more oppositions from the traditionalists, so much so that most of the Ḥanbalite anti-kalām literature was directed against Ashʿarism.[3]

Oppositon to al-Ashʿarī was not limited to theological matters. He was even accused of irreligiosity and immorality. A violent pamphlet against him by a certain Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan al-Ahwāzī (362-446 A.H./972-1055 C.E.) also remarked that al-Ashʿarī's descent from the great Companion Abū Mūsā would not be of any help to him in religion, if his claim is true; but if it is false, the Prophet condemned any

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[1]Ibid., Part 1, p. 42.

[2]Michel Allard, "En quoi Consiste l'Opposition Faite à al-Ashʿarī par ses Contemporains Ḥanbalites?" Revues Des Études Islamiques (Paris) 28 (1960):95-96.

[3]Makdisi, "Ashʿarī," Part 1, p. 48.

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false claimant of descent. A quotation from the pamphlet would give us some illustration of how serious the opposition to the theologian must have been:

> . . . It has been established and confirmed through transmission from the erudites, that he (al-Ashʿarī) was not religious, and that he had been downplaying the sharīʿa, committing fornication, and neglecting obligatory acts (al-mafrūḍāt). I heard Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Shāhid at al-Ahwāz saying, "Two people who had been Muʿtazilites and then abandoned the school, became heretics: Ibn al-Rāwandī and al-Ashʿarī." And I heard my brother Abū al-Ḥasan Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī saying that he heard from al-Qāḍī ibn Ṣakhr, who himself had heard it from his uncle Abū Muḥammad ibn Ṣakhr, from Abū al-Faḍl ibn al-Baqqāl, from a respected man, Abū ʿAlī ibn Jāmiʿ, saying, "I accompanied al-Ashʿarī for twenty years, and I never saw him pray. I accompanied him on a day of ʿId (one of the two most important annual religious celebrations) to the muṣallā (place of prayer) at Baṣra. And when we passed a desolated place he entered and urinated, and then came out without having washed his hands. Upon which I said to him, 'Why do you not get something to make wuḍūʾ (ritual ablution) while the street is full of people bringing water or ice?' He replied to me, 'No, a little urine is necessary on the day of celebration.' And then he entered the muṣallā and prayed without wuḍūʾ.[1]

All of the bitter criticism against him not withstanding, and despite his dualism in methodology, or, perhaps more appropriately, because of that dualism, Ashʿarism finally won the theological battle in Islam, becoming the final stage of Islamic theological orthodoxy. Al-Ashʿarī himself might not have had anything to do with the ultimate

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[1]Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ahwāzī, Mathālib Ibn Abī Bishr (Reproaches Against Ibn Abī Bishr [al-Ashʿarī]), trans. into French with Arabic text by Michel Allard, "Un Pamphlet Contre al-Aŝʿari", Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales (Damascus) 23 (1970):159.

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development of the school ascribed to him.[1] But the fact is that Ash'arism has been from about the twelfth century until now the dominant theological doctrine of Sunnite Islam throughout the world. After innumerable political, social and theological battles, about one century after the death of the eponym, Islamic orthodoxy defined itself theologically as Ash'arite. The theological discords continued, but there were fewer and fewer heretical attacks from the outside. Doctrinal controversies now were more within the movement, as conceptions of orthodoxy had not yet been established.[2] Even more crucial was the role of Ash'arism in resisting the further Hellenizing process of Muslims, as al-Ash'arī's work "marks the recession of the first wave of Hellenism" that had begun since the last days of the Umayyads. Ash'arism, as Watt puts it, was "a way of assimilating most of the basic elements of Greek thought without compromising any of the central dogmas of sunnite Islam."[3]

Methodologically, Ash'arism was not any better than Mu'tazilism, and, indeed, was even inclined to predeterminism in developing its doctrine.[4] But the solution made by

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[1]Makdisi, "Ash'arī," Part 1, p. 42.

[2]Arnaldez, "Sciences," p. 362.

[3]Watt, Philosophy, p. 89.

[4]Rahman, Methodology, p. 101

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al-Ashʿarī (and al-Māturīdī) was indeed a "catholic definition of Islam which silenced Khārijism and Muʿtazilism and saved the community from suicide."[1] In many respects, the theological elaboration offered by Ashʿarism was the culmination of the Ḥadīth movement which had lasted for decades, and the system was so pervasive that Rahman, for example, says it "resulted in creating a sense of equilibrium and balance that is probably unique in the history of mankind in its gigantic dimensions."[2]

The final triumph of Ashʿarism was mostly the result of its fervent propagandists like al-Bāqillānī, Ibn ʿAsākir, al-Subkī, Al-Shahrastānī, and al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghāzālī was particularly important and even decisive in helping Ashʿarism become victorious. Born at Ṭūs in Khurāsān, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (1058-1111 C.E.) was a student of the celebrated al-Juwaynī, (1028-1085 C.E.). Al-Ghazālī was then assigned a special position as the professor of Shāfiʿite fiqh law in the Niẓāmiyya College in Baghdad.

The success of Ashʿarism was to a great extent the product of the system of institutions called Niẓāmiyya Colleges (established by Niẓām al-Mulk, the pious and enlightened vizier of the Seljuq court). The system adopted Shāfiʿite school of law as its madhhab. It is not clear whether

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[1]Ibid., p. 61. [2]Ibid., p. 141.

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the system also officially adhered to the kalām of al-Ash'arī, but it is said that Niẓām al-Mulk had a "predeliction for Ash'arites, because he is a good Shāfi'ite."[1] Thus the system offered itself as "a favourable terrain for Ash'arite propaganda."[2]

Just as the case with al-Ash'arī, al-Ghazālī also seems to have suffered from the same defect of methodological dualism. He is known to have been opposed to kalām, especially because of his work Iljām al-'Awāmm 'an 'Ilm al-Kalām (Protecting Laymen from the Science of Kalām), that strongly warned Muslims not to study the science of rational theology. The book was the source of embarrassment to many Ash'arite propagandists.[3] But his work al-Iqtiṣād fī 'l-I'tiqād (Thriftiness in Faith) is clearly an accommodation to the Ash'arite kalām. His attitude towards theology was uncertain, even fragile, perhaps because of his famous crisis of conscience. But later he brilliantly presented a creative syncretism in his masterpiece, Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn (Revivification of the Sciences of Religion), while preserving the line of Ash'arite thought. The Iḥyā' paved the way for Ash-

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[1]Makdisi, "Ash'arī," 1:39.

[2]Brunschvig, "Mu'tazilisme," p. 355.

[3]George Makdisi, "Ash'arī and the Ash'arites in Islamic Religious History," part 2 Studia Islamica (Paris) 18 (1963):32.

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ʿarism to be adopted by Sunnite Muslims all the world over.[1]

Many scholars, Muslim and non-Muslim, have seen in al-Ghazālī the greatest personality in Islam after the Prophet Muḥammad in molding the doctrines of the religion. Again like al-Ashʿarī, he played the role of checking the process of the Hellenization of Islam following the second wave of Hellenism which had culminated in the falsafa of Ibn Sīnā. Yet, in defending Sunnism, al-Ghazālī used "the far superior Neoplatonic (including Aristotelian) methods and concepts which he had learnt from Avicenna and others."[2] He was also noted for his great admiration of Aristotelian syllogistic logic (al-qiyās al-manṭiqī), and he wrote several works on the subject.

In any case, al-Ghazālī was so persuasive and overwhelming in his defense of Sunnism that he was revered as Ḥujjat al-Islām (The Argument of Islam). Because of al-Ghazālī's methodology, Ibn Khaldūn considered him as the first Muslim thinker to use "the way of the moderns" (ṭarīqat al-khalaf) as against "the way of the ancients" (ṭarīqat al-salaf).[3]

Not very long after the death of al-Ghazālī, and with

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[1]See Brunschvig, "Muʿtazilisme," pp. 355-356.

[2]Watt, Philosophy, pp. 117-118.

[3]Ibid., p. 118.

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the support and protection of the Seljuq authorities, Ash-ʿarism became so well-established that it eventually gave Muʿtazilism, its rationalistic opponent, a coup de grâce, and Muʿtazilism faded. The Ḥanbalites, foes of the Ashʿarites from the traditionalist camp, though they survived much persecution and despite their admirable heroism, "succeeded only in making a nuisance of themselves with their die-hard traditionalism."[1]

In its latency, Ḥanbalism patiently took its time to be revitalized. No doubt, Ashʿarism came out of the theological battles victorious. But, as Makdisi remarks, "the place of Ashʿarism in the historical development of Muslim theology has been alloted an exaggerated importance," and "the place of traditionalism in the history of Muslim religious thought has been minimized, and its importance overlooked."[2]

Ḥanbalism was for a long time confined to Baghdad, its birthplace, but eventually it spread, especially to Jerusalem and Damascus. The Islamic world witnessed its vigorous reawakening under the energetic, courageous, and productive leadership of Ibn Taymiyya from Damascus (661-728 A.H./ 1263-1328 C.E.).

Like al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyya was to fight against the

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[1]Makdisi, "Ashʿarī," Part 1, p. 39.

[2]Ibid., Part 2, p. 37.

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corrupt 'ulamā'. His experience with the invading Mongols had convinced him that the religious leaders, particularly the 'ulamā', did not live up to their duties as guardians of the faith and the guides of the masses. He held them responsible for all of the calamities which befell the Muslim community. Like al-Ghazālī and al-Ash'arī, he was involved in a struggle against the remnants of the Hellenizing process within Islam, represented by kalām and falsafa as advocated by his contemporary mutakallimūn and the falāsifa.

The main target of Ibn Taymiyya's assault was the Aristotelian syllogistic logic (al-manṭiq), as he rightly saw it underlying all of the falāsifa's methodology. But he also took up the kalām theology in many of his very numerous works. He was especially bitter about the mutakallimūn's assertion that theirs was the only method for grasping the principles of religion.

Ḥanbalism as revitalized by Ibn Taymiyya has found the way to witness modern times through the eighteenth century reform of an Arabian 'ālim, al-Shaykh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1792 C.E.), giving rise to a movement nicknamed the Wahhābites. Today Ḥanbalism, as represented by Wahhābism, is the only orthodox madhhab which has become the raison d'être of a modern state and has been officially adopted as that state's sole interpretation of Islam.

Ibn Taymiyya's methodology was, as Watt puts it, "devised in order to escape from the rigidity of the scholastic

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methods and to make possible an adaptation of Islamic truth to contemporary condition." Unfortunately, the Wahhābites do not seem to have shown much interest in it. We see the beginning of serious interest in Ibn Taymiyya's methodology in modern times with Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), the student of the Egyptian reformer Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1904).[1]

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[1]Watt, Philosophy, pp. 164-165.

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CHAPTER II

IBN TAYMIYYA'S REFORM

The Background: Religious and Socio-Political.

Ibn Taymiyya was born on Monday, Rabī' al-Awwal 10, 661 A.H. (January 22, 1263 C.E.), five years after the fall of Baghdad, at Ḥarrān, a small town in northern Mesopotamia, near Urfa, in the southeastern part of modern Turkey. Then the whole family left Ḥarrān when he was five years old, in 667 A.H./1268 C.E., migrating to Damascus to get away from the marauding Mongols. His full name is Taqī al-Dīn Abū 'l-'Abbās Aḥmad 'Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn al-Imām Majd al-Dīn Abī al-Barakāt 'Abd al-Salām ibn Abī Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Abī al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Khuḍr ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Taymiyya al-Ḥarrānī.[1] He died in 728 A.H./1328 C.E.

It was an interesting coincidence that the birthtown of Ibn Taymiyya had been noted for its role as the most important stronghold of Hellenism. Ḥarrān succeeded Alexandria and even Antioch as an active center of learning. Even more, the Ḥarrānīs were successful in preserving the old paganism, keeping Christianity away up to the times of Islam. Then

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[1]Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Julaynid, al-Imām Ibn Taymiyya wa Mawqifuhū min Qaḍiyyat al-Ta'wīl (Cairo: al-Maṭābi' al-Amīriyya, 1393/1973), p. 15.

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they identified themselves as the Sabeans (al-Ṣābi'ūn of the Qur'ān)[1] and thus had a place, together with other prophetic religions, within the inclusivism of the Islamic religious political system. These Hellenist pagans managed to cultivate the Hellenic tradition as "an all-sufficient spiritual and cultural whole," and, later, together with the Christians and the Mazdeans, taught Muslims their sciences, using Arabic as a medium of instruction.[2]

Ibn Taymiyya was born into a prominent Ḥanbalī family. His father was a scholar of Ḥadīth who faithfully followed the tradition of the Ḥanbalīs in advocating rigid Sunnism. Ḥanbalī madhhab, it should be noted, had not been so successful as the other schools of law to establish itself and to prevail in any extensive territory.

The center of Ḥanbalism remained Baghdad, the home of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and only later moved to Damascus, because of the activity of Ibn Taymiyya.[3] Even in these two cities, Ḥanbalism was later to decline to a dwindling minority, sufficiently alive only to inspire the much later reform movement of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb in the eighteenth century.

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[1]See Qur'ān 2:62, 5:72 and 22:17.

[2]Hodgson, Venture, 1:235, 298 and 412.

[3]Joseph Schacht, An Introduction to Islamic Law (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 66.

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Ḥanbalism was recognized by the Sunni Muslim community as one of the four schools of law (madhāhib), but in fact it was not just another madhhab alongside the other three. It was more comprehensive and radical in nature, advocating social and religious reforms in a puritanical direction all along its history.[1]

The Ḥanbalites as a minority were confronted with the majority of Muslims who, despite their formal adherence to Sunnism, allowed all sorts of un-Islamic beliefs and practices rampant in the community. The greatest authority in Islamic sciences had been al-Ghazālī, who had tried, and succeeded to reconciliate ritualism, rationalism, dogmatism, and mysticism. Al-Ghazālī's system had since become "the common property of orthodox-Sunni Islam."[2]

Al-Ghazālī was the powerful advocate of Ash'arism and, like many Ash'arites, was a Ṣūfī. But his Ṣūfism was profoundly respectful of the law of Sharī'a, and, in his Iḥyā', he accommodates a good part of Ibn Ḥanbal's Kitāb al-Wara' compiled by Abū Bakr al-Marwazī. He was an uncompromising adversary of the doctrine of incarnation (ḥulūl), as he was also known to have fought against the antinomianism (ibāḥiy-

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[1]Hodgson, Venture, 3:159-160.

[2]Ignaz Goldziher, Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law, trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1981, pp. 240-241.

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ya) of some Ṣūfī trends.[1] He was a follower of Aristotle in logic and in his book Qiṣṭās put some of the Qur'ānic arguments in the Aristotelian form, forgetting that the "retribution that follows the gainsaying of prophets is established by the method of simple enumeration of historical instances," i.e., by induction, not deduction.[2]

Despite the popularity of al-Ghazālī and his teachings, the excessively superstitious tendency of the popular religion was not altogether checked. The great majority of Muslims succeeded in maintaining the monotheism of the Qur'ān, but mostly they were simultaneously imbued with many elements of pantheistic ideas taught by many Ṣūfī thinkers--for example, Ibn ʿArabī, "a kind of syncretism without assimilation." Ṣūfism itself might have produced some virtues, like austerity, humility, and self control, but very often these were accompanied by exaggerations and eccentricities in religious thought and practice, and widespread exploitation of human weaknesses by some pseudo-spiritual leaders of the ṭarīqa (Ṣūfī brotherhood), not only among the splinters in the movement, but also at times by some of the major orders.[3]

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[1]Henri Laoust, Les Schismes dans l'Islam (Paris: Payot, 1977), pp. 203-204.

[2]Muhammad Iqbal, The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam (Lahore: The Ashraf Press, 1960), p. 129.

[3]H.A.R. Gibb, Studies on the Civilization of Islam, ed. Stanford J. Shaw and William R. Polk (Princeton: Princeton

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Charlatanism of the Ṣūfīs, together with their abuse of some psychological methods and their compromise with the traditional animism, had lowered the moral standards of the community, so that popular Ṣūfism became the overwhelming factor in the moral degradation that swept the Islamic world.[1] The mass of Muslims believed in the saints (awliyā', singular walī) and sought their blessings (barakāt), acknowledged their miracles (karāmāt), venerated their tombs, and asked for their intercessions (shafā'āt).[2]

Alongside Ṣūfism was an excessive reverence for the Prophet, partly because of popular misconceptions of miracles (mu'jizāt), which "not merely brought him into the category of wonderworkers at the popular level, but also led to the popular equivalent of the belief in the Spirit of Muḥammad as the Logos, guardian, and preserver of the universe."[3] The mawlid (celebration of the Prophet's birthday) became popular as a major aspect of Ṣūfī rituals, but let itself be polluted with such moral laxity as mingling of men and women during the festivals. Such festivals may not have

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University Press, paperback edition, 1982), pp. 212-213.

[1]H.A.R. Gibb, Mohammedanism, (London: Oxford University Press, second edition, 1978), p. 110; Rahman, Islam, p. 199.

[2]R.A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 463.

[3]J. Spencer Trimingham, The Sufi Orders in Islam (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 27.

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been important aspects of the people's religion earlier, but they were common in Ibn Taymiyya's time.[1]

It was not easy for the Muslim community to realize its deviations, since such practices had existed in one way or another for centuries, so that people took them for granted, and even respected them as Sunna.[2] In addition, Islam holds basically that judgment of a man's interior motives is reserved for God, which makes it difficult for someone to be convicted of heresy as long as he could correctly or falsely find a formal religious dictum, mostly from the established fiqh but also from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, by which to justify his belief or act. This was what the leaders of the Ṣūfī practices usually did: they would stress, and try to prove, that their practices were in line with the Sharī'a.[3]

Moreover, Ṣūfī orders "became hierarchical institutions and their officials approached nearer to a clergy class than any other in Islam, whilst the zāwiya was equivalent of the local church." Mixed into the local animism and occultism, a "special cult surrounded the sheikh's person, associated with the power emanating from the founder-saint of the ṭā'ifa: he becomes an intermediary between God and man.[4]

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[1]Michael Winter, Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1982), pp. 177-178.

[2]Goldziher, Introduction, pp. 240-241.

[3]Trimingham, Sūfī, p. 150.

[4]Ibid., pp. 71-72.

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Closely related to the development of Ṣūfism was the growth of falsafa. It is thought that by the time of Ibn Taymiyya the triumph of the philosophized kalām was consolidated, with official support, over the remaining Sunni textualism.[1] As with many Ṣūfīs, the falāsifa understood the religion, particularly the Qur'ān, as unity, but this unity was "imposed upon the Qur'ān (and Islam in general) from without rather than derived from a study of the Qur'ān itself." Represented most importantly by Ibn Sīnā's philosophy and Ibn ʿArabī's mysticism, there arose Muslim intellectual constructs with more or less artificial Islamic character, where non-Islamic ideas were "adapted somewhat to the Islamic mental milieu, and expressed mostly in Islamic terminology,[2] at the expense of the basic principles and methodology of the Qur'ān.

Ibn Sīnā might have superimposed Islamic elements upon his strictly rational system, but his universe, like Aristotle's and many other falāsifa's, is ruled by necessity. "There is no providential care for individuals, though all that is, is good; evil is the privation, the fading out, of good. In such a universe there can be no freewill."[3] The

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[1]Hodgson, Venture, 2:492.

[2]Fazlur Rahman, Islam and Modernity (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 3-4.

[3]Knowles, Medieval Thought, pp. 198-199.

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conception of God as the Being who takes personal interest in individuals, who is capable of being pleased and displeased, and who responds to actions and prayers became doubtful when put under the light of the rationalism of falsafa, which violated the requisite of God's absoluteness.

Furthermore, the falāsifa found untenable the belief of God as all-knowing, as perceiving in advance any human acts, yet also endowing man with the freedom on which to base his responsibility for his actions. Hence their preoccupation with efforts to conciliate religious principles with philosophical findings.[1] These efforts were carried out not only by the mutafalsifa ("philosophizing people") but also by the mutakallima (people of kalām theology).

Such efforts never ended satisfactorily. What is more, one of the most destructive aspects of falsafa, the deterministic world-outlook, had by now found its way into Muslim thought, and become the dominant way of life of the community, resulting in popular fatalism and passivism. Even in Ash'arite theology, one which had been the established doctrine of Sunni Islam, the cardinal tenets were the inefficacy of the human will and purposelessness of the divine law. These tenets conflicted with the spirit of the Qur'ānic teachings, and eliminated the foundations of the ethical and

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[1]Leo W. Schwartz, Great Ages & Ideas of the Jewish People (New York: Random House, Inc., 1956), p. 245.

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moral intentions of religion. In other words, they did away with the aim of prophetic missions.[1]

The situation of fiqh was no better. As Iqbal remarks, there was among jurisprudents (al-fuqahā') of those times a tendency to "over-organization by a false reverence of the past," with the implied belief in the finality of the madhāhib, closing the gate of ijtihād. Many superstitions were sanctioned by ijmā', which seems to have been simply the general, uneducated acceptance of a practice or belief by the community.[2] Consequently, the fuqahā' became progressively intolerant, accustomed--as if repeating the infamous miḥna of al-Ma'mūn's time--to persecuting those who failed to conform to the opinions of their schools. Ibn Taymiyya himself was to experience such persecution.

Political insecurity was persistent. The tragic fall of Baghdad was still fresh in the minds of Muslims, and uncertainty haunted Muslim rulers. Many of them were not allowed to die a natural death, and officials seldom got effective tenure for more than three years. As it happened to Ibn Taymiyya, an official was often appointed and dismissed several times during his life, despite his competence and ability.[3]

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[1]See Rahman, Modernity, pp. 3-4.

[2]See Iqbal, Reconstruction, p. 151.

[3]Carl Brockleman, ed., History of the Islamic Peoples (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 237.

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The Program: Purification and Rejuvenation.

Cast against such a background, the main concern of Ibn Taymiyya with his reform was to liberate the Muslims from the uncritical acceptance of doctrines and to launch a campaign which would make them aware of the simple but valid, effective, and original concepts of Islam. It was the belief of Ibn Taymiyya that the Muslims were not responsive to the challenge of their times, because they misconceived their religion, which made it irrelevant to the demands and problems of ever-changing situations. In other words, Ibn Taymiyya found the community's conceptions of Islam had been so long obsolete because, among other reasons, of the sweeping practice of taqlīd and other uncritical acceptance of the religion.

Ibn Taymiyya was particularly struck by the prevalence of superstitions and fatalism which were the corollaries of popular Ṣūfism, justified by the 'ulamā' on the basis of ijmā'. First he had to launch a program stressing that the religion is only what God and His Prophet have prescribed in the Holy Book (al-kitāb) and the Tradition (al-sunna), and condemning whatever beliefs and practices existed outside the scriptural framework as illegitimate innovations (bida', singular bid'a). This program could not have been a total novelty for the community, since from early times the Khārijites had also insisted on an uncompromising adherence to

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the rules of the faith, a fact which later, during the 'Abbāsid period, was espoused by the Sunni 'ulamā' under the pioneering efforts of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. These efforts in turn gave scholars the urge to carry out more comprehensive research of the Prophetic Traditions.[1] Ibn Taymiyya's campaign invited violent reaction in a period of Islamic history when Muslims were growing less and less tolerant. His reform, as Hodgson puts it, was civically minded, implicating not only the purely religious aspects of the community but also the worldly vested interests of the 'ulamā', particularly those who worked with the government supporting a certain school of law (madhhab) or a particular theology.[2] Conflict with some governmental authorities was unavoidable.

Alongside his advocacy of the return to the Holy Book and the Prophetic Traditions was his rejection of the hitherto established conception of ijmā' as the legitimate source of religious authority, and his insistence that the only binding ijmā' was that which had been done by the first three generations of Muslims--the Salaf. The basis for his argument was that those generations of Muslims had been the only ones that the Holy Book mentions as having been pleasing to God and meriting the promise of Paradise. A Ḥadīth

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[1]John Obert Voll, Islam, Continuity and Change in the Modern World (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), p. 30.

[2]See Hodgson, Venture, 2:422.

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also says that the Salaf's generation was the best generation after the generation of the Prophet.[1] Thus, their beliefs and practices must have been religiously valid and authoritative and so exemplary for the Muslims of the following generations. After the Salaf there could not be any community whose consensus is religiously binding, since there is no explicit or implicit scriptural provision for their being right and pleasing to God.

This rigorous argument of Ibn Taymiyya should not have been very surprising. Such rigor had also been found among the Ẓāhirīs, particularly in the writings of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456 A.H./1065 C.E.), which also could be traced back to the Khārijites of the first century Islam, among others. In fact, the Khārijite axiom that the only legally valid ijmā' was the consensus of the Companions of the Prophet had been the basis for Ibn Ḥanbal's contention.[2]

A resourceful and prolific polemicist, Ibn Taymiyya was engaged in all sorts of arguments and debates, written and oral, private and public (munāẓara). His program was becoming more and more critical of the 'ulamā' who served those in power. The after-effect was his stormy relationships not only with many scholars of the time but also with most of the governmental authorities, which resulted in his impris-

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[1]See below, p. 103. [2]Schacht, Introduction, p. 64.

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onment from time to time, until his death in Damascus.

The polemics were gradually transposed from the domain of personages to that of ideas. Ibn Taymiyya realized that most of the community's practices were rooted in doctrines of scholastic theology, kalām and the pseudo-Islamic Hellenism, falsafa. These doctrines claimed that reason is needed to understand religious principles, implying that reason is superior to revelation, since reason has the right, if not the duty, to interpret the revelation's ambiguities. Ibn Taymiyya's program was centered around the task of disproving such a claim, advocating the superiority of revelation to reason, since divine teachings are supra-rational. His recurrent theme was that there can be no antagonism between faith and intellect, that faith is always logical, or that naṣṣ (scriptural text) and ʿaql (human reason) are different aspects of the same truth.[1] The upshot of his program was that he had to take up more specific, concrete issues like the Hellenic elements in the kalām arguments, the falsafa idea of the eternity of the world, and Aristotelian formal logic as the metrics of sciences.

Ibn Taymiyya was especially hard on falsafa because he saw it as the main source of all deviationist trends in Is-

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[1]Henri Laoust, Essai sur les Doctrines Sociales et Politiques de Taḳī-d-Dīn b. Taimīya (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale) 10 (1939):551.

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lam. He did not outright condemn the falāsifa as irreligious, but he harshly held them as being foremost among those responsible for all religious anomalies in the community. To him, the falāsifa were heretics. Some of them, like Bābak al-Khurramī and Abū Sa'īd al-Jannābī, were extremists; Ibn Rushd and Abū 'l-Barakāt were moderate; and al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā were deviationists.[1]

He saw in falsafa the doctrine from which Jahm ibn Ṣafwān had borrowed his idea of predeterminism that was to Ibn Taymiyya diametrically opposed to the ethical and moral aspirations of Islamic teachings. Mu'tazilism was more positive than Jahmism in its doctrine concerning human freedom and responsibility. Yet Ibn Taymiyya also saw in Mu'tazilism the same philosophical influence as Jahmism, since the Mu'tazilites and virtually all mutakallimūn from among the Ash'arites and others used some methods borrowed from falsafa in establishing God's existence and in confirming the createdness of the world.[2]

Then Ibn Taymiyya came upon the Bāṭinites and the Ismā'ilites, who, he thought, followed the falāsifa in the doctrine of ta'wīl or allegorical interpretation of the hidden meanings of the sacred texts and developed ta'wīl in a way

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[1]See Laoust, Schismes, p. 456.

[2]al-Julaynid, al-Imām, pp. 16-17.

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that to him was arbitrary, betraying the real intentions of scripture. Ibn Taymiyya criticized the falāsifa's concept of the eternity of the world, and saw it as the cause for the deviationist tendencies in monistic Ṣūfism of, for example, Ibn ʿArabī. Furthermore, the falāsifa's adoption of the Aristotelian formal logic had given a false idea about the nature of reason.[1]

Ibn Taymiyya's distaste for the speculation of kalām and falsafa affected his civic-minded program of reformation, leading him to one form or another of social and political positivism. Having said that religion is only what the Kitāb and the Sunna laid down, and having insisted that the only Muslim community with a binding consensus was the first three generations, Ibn Taymiyya was confronted with the problem of how to make the religion relevant to the living community with its ever-changing demands.

At this stage (as Hodgson puts it) Ibn Taymiyya offered a positive program by endeavouring to make the Sharīʿa more relevant to the myriad situations of real life. The Sharīʿa for him was not prescribed by God arbitrarily, but ordained for the comprehensible aims of human life. In order to live up to the intentions of the Sharīʿa, the community has to consider its well-being continuously. The fuqahāʾ had been

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[1]Laoust, Schismes, p. 456.

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noted for their concepts of istiḥsān, istiṣlāḥ, or maṣlaḥa (all of which mean the idea of taking into consideration the welfare of the community in making a legal judgment) as the basis for their efforts to adapt religious intentions to the realities of society. Ibn Taymiyya gave a more precise and logical definition to those concepts which allowed "a great flexibility to legists, provided they did not feel too much bound by taqlīd and the notion that ijtihād was closed."[1]

The basis of Ibn Taymiyya's solution was his concept of the sound analogy (al-qiyās al-ṣaḥīḥ), which for him rests upon an accurate understanding of what he called manāṭ al-ḥukm (the pivot of judgment) or al-ʿilla al-sharʿiyya (the cause of the legal prescription) of a religious doctrine. This for him is the middle term (al-ḥadd al-awsaṭ) of a qiyās, or the "common link" (amr jāmiʿ) between analogous subjects. The qiyās of Ibn Taymiyya was, as Malcolm Kerr puts it, an analogy developed "along carefully defined lines, characterized especially by a regard for precise and systematic logic," which for Ibn Taymiyya is an extension of the moral content of religious tenets. Such an analogy cannot be based simply on the logicians' usual deductive method, which Ibn Taymiyya bitterly opposed, but more on moral insight. This moral insight, in turn, should be derived from common

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[1]Hodgson, Venture, 2:470-471.

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sense more than from esoteric or inspirational claims. As a consequence, istiṣlāḥ for him is only an extension of qiyās; the dividing line between the two is in fact unclear, since through istiṣlāḥ "a consideration of utility neither explicitly enjoined nor excluded by the revealed texts would be assumed to be valid as a basis for judgment."[1]

Accordingly, Ibn Taymiyya's system was a natural anathema to the prevailing practice of taqlīd. Such a great deal of flexibility in the Islamic legal system led to the doctrine that the gate of ijtihād should be kept open, especially for the authorities, to make relevant, meaningful judgments of the currently demanding problems. The result of an ijtihād could only be relative, never an absolutely true prescription, but it is necessary if religious intentions are to be brought to living realities. Once a decision was enacted, Ibn Taymiyya held it necessary for subjects to comply with an authority's ijtihād, without the right to oppose him or his representatives.[2]

Brought into the political field, Ibn Taymiyya's principles resulted in an even more impressively pragmatic attitude. Having taken into account the global political reali-

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[1]Malcolm H. Kerr, Islamic Reform, The Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad ʿAbduh and Rashid Rida (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), pp. 68, 77-79, 194.

[2]Majmūʿ Fatāwā Ibn Taymiyya, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ibn Qāsim, vol. 30 (Rabat: al-Maʿārif, n.d.), p. 407.

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ties of the Islamic world of the time, he concluded that the universal caliphate was not feasible for the Muslim community, or even necessary. Instead, he advocated only of cooperation among Muslim governments, based on the unity of the umma--not on a political level, but mainly on social and religious levels. For him the caliphate, or any form of goverment, is only a means to an end, and the end seems to have been, for him, the security and law and order for all citizens--those worldly conditions which are needed for every individual to be able to perform his religious duties so that he can attain happiness in the after-life. Thus, he approvingly cited several Ḥadīths which commanded Muslims to obey rulers, even if those rulers are unjust, indicating that the supreme value in politics appeared to be not justice or religious piety at the individual level, but establishment of public safety and law and order at the social level.[1] He even argued that we should accept as valid "going to ḥajj, jihād, meetings and festivals with the governmental authorities, even if they are irreligious or immoral."[2]

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[1]Rahman, Modernity, p. 29; Hamid Enayat, Modern Islamic Political Thought (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), p. 12.

[2]al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya (Cairo: Quṣayy Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, 1393 A.H.), p. 20. Cf. Minhāj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya, 4 vols. (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿat al-Amīriyya, 1322 A.H.), 1:371; al-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1951), pp. 173-174.

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Before the fall of Baghdad, the Sunni political theorists had always been instrumental in giving legitimation and rationalization for the established political regimes. But the pragmatism of Ibn Taymiyya led him not only against any disobedience or rebellion towards the established governments, but to his more direct involvement in many political tasks and even military campaigns such as the Muslims' struggle against the invading Mongols. Sometimes he was even in the commanding position in combat.[1] His heroism earned him the title of a mujāhid (jihād-fighter), besides his being a mujtahid (ijtihād-thinker).[2]

Ibn Taymiyya's program of reformation was to purify and, simultaneously, to rejuvenate Islam. His main instrument was the ideology of Sunnism, which for him was the only way to understand Islam, and the moderator (wasaṭ) between all shades of extremisms in the existing Muslim schools of thought. The moderating group, he said, was known as ahl al-kitāb wa 'l-sunna or ahl al-sunna wa 'l-jamā'a, or simply ahl al-jamā'a, names that emphasized not only the importance of Traditions as the basis for authenticity and orthodoxy, but, as had been always the case with the ideology of Jamā-

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[1]al-Julaynid, al-Imām, pp. 17-19.

[2]Serajul Haque, "Ibn Taymiyya," in A History of Muslim Philosophy, ed. M.M. Sharif, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963) 2:797.

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'ism from the early time of Islamic history, also the primacy of social harmony and solidarity of the majority of the Muslims, if not the whole community.[1]

In the following chapters we will see more about Ibn Taymiyya's methodology, the way he understood kalām and falsafa and then attempted to repudiate their principles. Laoust has said that Ibn Taymiyya was not close to the profundity and originality of al-Ghazālī, nor to the latter's immense literary talent, but that scholars have tended to exaggerate al-Ghazālī's influence and underestimate Ḥanbalism, for which Ibn Taymiyya was the most impressive spokesman.[2] Modern scholars have been of different opinions about Ibn Taymiyya's intellectual achievement. Ibrahim Madkour noted that Ibn Taymiyya's critique of Hellenism in general, and Aristotelian logic in particular, was the longest and most detailed, but repetitious and digressive, besides being not always soundly based; furthermore, he was more dogmatic than rational.[3] But Montgomery Watt says that the critique was "extremely acute and well founded, notably his Refu-

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[1] al-'Aqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya, p. 19. Cf., Henri Laoust, "Le Reformisme d'Ibn Taimiya," Islamic Studies (Karachi) 1 (September 1962):42.

[2] Laoust, "Reformisme," pp. 27-28.

[3] Ibrahim Madkour, "La Logique d'Aristote chez les Mutakallimūn," in Islamic Philosophical Theology, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Albany: State University of New York, 1979), pp. 64-66.

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tation of the Logicians."[1] Meanwhile, Joseph Schacht says about Ibn Taymiyya, from the perspective of the development of Ḥanbalī madhhab, that his intellectual contribution was "one of the highlights of a brilliant period in the history of the school," although, as a well-read ʿālim in kalām and falsafa, he was atypical of Ḥanbalite scholarship.[2]

Even more important, as indicated in the Introduction, is the influence of Ibn Taymiyya's ideology on the Islamic world in modern times. Wahhābism, the ideology of Saudi Arabia, has been instrumental in disseminating Ibn Taymiyya's views throughout the Muslim world, and inspiring many reformist and revivalist movements.[3]

The ideology of Ibn Taymiyya and the doctrines of the traditional scholars of Islam have often, as Laoust remarked, been judged in modern times as too conservative in comparison to the spirit of the modernists. But Laoust suggested that it would be unfair to exclude Ibn Taymiyya from any study of Muslim societies, whether concerning institutions Muslims support or ideologies they follow, if one is to understand the modern evolution of the Islamic world.[4]

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[1]Watt, Philosophy, p. 161.

[2]Schacht, Introduction, p. 66.

[3]Laoust, "Reformisme," p. 46.

[4]Ibid., p. 47.

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CHAPTER III

THE METHODOLOGY OF IBN TAYMIYYA

Fiṭra as the Basis of Human Knowledge.

Ibn Taymiyya's perspective on kalām and falsafa was directly related with his views on the problem of the nature of human knowledge. As an orthodox Muslim, Ibn Taymiyya based his theory of knowledge entirely on his religious convictions. Underlying his epistemology was his understanding of the Qur'ānic concept of fiṭra or the sound nature of a human being, by which an individual intuitively knows what is wrong and what is right. God created man on fiṭra wherein "lies the knowledge of truth and his attestation of it, and the recognition of falsehood and his rejection of it."[1]

It is also because of the fiṭra that every individual

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[1]Naqḍ al-Manṭiq, ed. Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq Ḥamza, Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣanīʿ and Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Faqī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1370/1951), p. 29; al-Radd ʿalā al-Manṭiqiyyīn, ed. Syed Sulaimān Nadvi (Bombay: al-Maṭbaʿat al-Qayyima, 1368/1949), p. 428. Cf. Qur'ān 30:30, "And so, set your face for the true religion, as you incline naturally towards Truth in accordance with the fiṭra in which God has created man. . . ." Asad renders the term fiṭra as "natural disposition" which connotes in this contexts man's inborn intuitive ability to discern between right and wrong, true and false, and, thus, to sense God's existence and oneness. And a ḥadīth says, "Every child is born in fiṭra. . . ." Muhammad Asad, The Message of the Qur'ān (Gibraltar, Dār al-Andalus, 1980), p. 621; Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Ṣābūnī, Ṣafwat al-Tafāsīr, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 1981), 3:478.

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is aware whether he knows something or he does not know. "Man can find himself knowing, and this is truth," holds Ibn Taymiyya. "Therefore, we do not argue against him who denies a truth except by the fact that we ourselves have the knowledge of that truth," as is the case with the argument against those who deny the Traditions handed down uninterruptedly (al-akhbār al-mutawātira) by the fact that "we ourselves have the knowledge of those Traditions and are absolutely certain about them, like our absolute certainty about anything we directly perceive." This is like the fact that man finds himself hearing or seeing right at the time when he looks at a visible object or listens to an audible voice. Knowledge is, then, acquired by the mind just in the same way as other sensations and emotions are acquired. All this happens in accordance with the cause created by God ingrained in man's very nature. The human mind acquires knowledge and becomes conscious of it directly by his own intuition, just as the mind perceives also without any intermediary. The occurrence of knowledge in his mind is like the occurrance of foods and beverages in his body: the mind perceives the knowledge assenting to it, just as the body digests foods and beverages. Knowledge is indeed the mind's food and beverage.[1]

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[1] Naqd, pp. 27-28 and 36; al-Radd, p. 26.

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Ibn Taymiyya elaborates further his concept of fiṭra by arguing that man has, on the one hand, the faculty of reason (al-naẓar), consisting of the powers of cognizance, perception, and comprehension, and, on the other hand, the faculty of volition (al-irāda) consisting of the powers of discernment and emotion. These two groups of faculties are complementary. With the first group of faculties man accepts truth and rejects falsehood, and with the second he innately inclines toward the acknowledgeables (al-ma'rūfāt) and intuitively sidesteps the unacknowledgeables (al-munkarāt). "Therefore whenever the truth is there, the fiṭra would naturally accept it and feel secure with it." And, on the contrary, "whatever is false, the fiṭra would naturally withhold from it."[1]

To support his argument, Ibn Taymiyya quotes a Ḥadīth that says that the truest of all personal names are Ḥarith (meaning, cultivator) and Hammām (meaning, solicitous). He understands from this Ḥadīth that man is naturally a cultivating and solicitous creature. This, he says, is in accordance with the dictate of his fiṭra. And he says that man would not cultivate or do anything unless there is a benefit to gain or a danger to avoid.[2] Therefore he is supposed to

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[1] Naqḍ, p. 29; al-Radd, p. 381.

[2] Naqḍ, p. 29.

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know whatever he does. Thus, man would not commit a wrong act unless he is ignorant of its nature. This view conforms to a Ḥadīth on the authority of a Successor (al-tābiʿī), Abū ʿĀliya al-Riyāḥī, (d. ca. 90 A.H.), who used to ask Companions of the Prophet about the Qur'ānic verse (4:17), "Forgiveness is only incumbent on God towards those who do evil in ignorance and repent soon after that," and their reply was, "Anyone who defies God, does that in ignorance; and anyone who repents before death, indeed repents soon."[1]

Ibn Taymiyya contends further that if man does not move unless in expectation of something, and if, in case of being frightened, he does not make an effort except for safety, or does not flee except to avert danger, that impulse is not there in him except because of something that is constitutional in his mind, that is, the natural inclination towards virtue (faḍl). This is another explanation of the concept of fiṭra. "God ever creates man in pursuit of goodness that he tries to gain with his activities."[2]

Although the human mind perceives knowledge directly, Ibn Taymiyya says that knowledge itself comes from God into the mind through angels, and it is through them that God bestows upon man cognitive capacities. Nevertheless, despite the fact that a perceiving capacity is implanted in the mind

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[1]Ibid., p. 30.

[2]Ibid.

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with its inclination to truth, it is still possible for man to make mistakes in his decisions and activities due to false assumptions either pertaining to the goal of those activities or to the method of attaining that goal.[1] Therefore, it could happen that falsehood appears to someone as truth, and truth appears to him as falsehood. Such delusion, he says, comes from the satanic forces.[2]

The same principle also applies in reverse: any confirmation of truth must come from God through angels. Ibn Taymiyya vindicates his contention by quoting a Qur'ānic verse, "Those are the believers in whose hearts He has inscribed faith, and whom He has strengthened with the Spirit from Himself."[3] He then quotes 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd[4] who said that the angels have their touch (lamma) and the satans have their own touch. "The angelic touch is the drive for virtue and attestation of truth, and the satanic touch is the temptation to malevolence and the rejection of truth." Ibn Mas'ūd's statement is authentic, Ibn Taymiyya says, and some people even ascribe it to the Prophet. According to

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[1]Ibid., pp. 28-29.

[2]Ibid., p. 33; al-Radd, p. 323.

[3]Qur'ān 58:22.

[4]The famous Meccan Companion of the Prophet who was a soldier, and then the director of finances at Kūfa. He died in Madina in 653. Dodge, Fihrist, 2:963.

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him, the statement "covers all of the principles in a human being concerning theory (ʿilm) and practice (ʿamal), and emotion (shuʿūr) and volition (irāda)."[1]

The source of the mind's perception, then, is either the angelic or the satanic power. The angels support man's inclination towards truth and encourage righteousness, and the satans do just the reverse: uphold man's delusion with falsity and push him towards evil. Both are also in concord with man's own nature, as the consent or refusal of truth is linked to man's faculty of reasoning (al-naẓar), and the drive to command good or forbid evil is related to his faculty of volition (irāda).[2]

God is the highest Truth, and human knowledge about Him is the highest wisdom. In fact, God is the Prime Mover of all truths, although the truths themselves come down to man's heart through the intermediary angels. God is the Sustainer of all creatures and their true Owner. He is also the Instructor of all sciences. Therefore, says Ibn Taymiyya,

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[1] Naqḍ, p. 29. Cf. Qur'ān 91:8, "And He revealed to it (the soul) what is wrong for it and what is right for it." Ibn Taymiyya also quotes some other Qur'ānic verses that he sees relevant to his argument, 2:268, "Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins upon you what is foul; whereas God promises you forgiveness from Himself and bounty. . . ." and 3:175, "It is satan who only frightens his friends; so fear them not, but fear Me, if you are believers," and 8:48, "And when satan made their deeds seem fair to them. . . ."

[2] Naqḍ., p. 32.

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remembrance (dhikr) of Him is the foundation of all wisdom, the spring of knowledge, and the source of guidance. That is why the Sharī'a encourages people to remember God, so that He would guide them to truth, and ward them off falsehood. In addition, by dhikr man is guarded against satan, as satan is the tempter (al-waswās) and the withdrawer (al-khannās).[1] Satans sow temptation to do evil in the hearts of those who are negligent of God, and withdraw from those who are continuously aware of the divine presence. Ibn Taymiyya also says that dhikr includes such activities as reading and studying holy books and learning religious sciences. He quotes Mu'ādh ibn Jabal, who said, "Studying religious sciences is a glorification of God (tasbīḥ)."[2]

Furthermore, the basic concept about God, the highest self-evident Truth--as, for example, that He is the most sublime above all creatures--is obtained by man through his intuition. Such primary knowledge about divinity is shared by all humanity, because of the fiṭra upon which God constituted man.[3] This primordial knowledge is the basis of human knowledge and the foundation of man's reflection (tafakkur) of the world, on which all other human knowledge rests. "God is known only by fiṭra. Thus man remembers, rather than

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[1]See Qur'ān 114:4. [2]Naqḍ, pp. 31 and 34.

[3]Ibid., p. 35. Cf. al-Julaynid, al-Imām, pp. 327-331. See Qur'ān 39:67.

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reflects upon Him," as reflection is done by using metaphors and comparisons which are the characteristics of the world of creatures, whereas God is absolutely incomparable to anything. Thus he holds that dhikr pertains to God, and tafakkur pertains to the created world, as man will never be able to make a right estimate of God.[1]

Just as dhikr, the fountain of wisdom, is in the core of religiosity, true knowledge is always supported by true religion, which, despite the fact that it is a kind of fiṭra itself, is conceived in full only by way of instruction (khabar) from God through His prophets.

The religious truth, as is the case with every truth, cannot in turn be in conflict with sound sense perception (ḥiss), be it internal (bāṭin) or external (ẓāhir). In fact ḥiss is the instrument for naẓar (reflection), which is equivalent to tafakkur as a source of human knowledge, particularly about external realities. In short, knowledge is founded on fiṭra, and acquired through religious instruction (khabar), sense perception (ḥiss), and rational reflection (naẓar).[2]

Having argued that true knowledge should be in one way or another attested by sense perception, Ibn Taymiyya op-

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[1]See Qur'ān 6:91, 22:74, 39:67.

[2]al-Furqān bayn al-Ḥaqq wa 'l-Bāṭil, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Wafā, (Cairo: Maṭba'a al-'Āṣima, 1966), p. 55.

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poses vehemently the philosophers' concept of universals. For him a universal is no more than a human mind's abstraction which may or may not conform to the external reality. Assuming a universal as reality, therefore, is against fiṭra, as fiṭra does not perceive such things as a universal in the real world. What exist externally are only individual, particular things, and those are the realities.[1] Truth is always natural, because of its foundation in fiṭra. Therefore, as is the case with all artificial constructions, the philosophers' universals cannot exist in reality.

Ibn Taymiyya also says that the proponents of rational interpretation of religion among the falāsifa and the mutakallimūn, especially the falāsifa, contradicted the prophets concerning God and the hereafter, and thus they brought people out of the apodeictic sciences and rational proofs that God has given them through their fiṭra. They also tried to explain the Creator of the universe, but their methods were full of contradictions, and they rejected "the manifestly rational (ṣarīḥ al-maʿqūl) and the authentically transmitted (ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl)."[2]

More specifically, Ibn Taymiyya discusses the epistemological controversy between the mutakallimūn and falāsi-

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[1] al-Radd, pp. 81-85.

[2] Ibid., p. 323; al-Nubuwwāt, (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿat al-Salafiyya, 1386 A.H.), p. 158.

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fa. The theologians disagree as to the nature of the acquisition of knowledge by human minds after those minds have considered a proof. Some of them say that the acquisition of knowledge in the mind is through generation (tawallud). Others deny tawallud and hold that knowledge comes directly from God. According to Ibn Taymiyya, this view that acquisition of knowledge comes directly from God "was supported by those among the theologians who attached themselves to the Sunna, and by some jurisprudents (al-fuqahā') among the followers of Mālik, Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and others."[1]

The falāsifa, on the other hand, hold that knowledge is acquired by way of emanation from the Active Intellect at the time when the human mind is ready to accept that emanation. Some of them, like al-Fārābī, identify the Active Intellect with Gabriel, the source of inspiration for man and the dispatcher of revelation to prophets. Gabriel is identified as the intellect of the lunar sphere that directly influences human lives. Hence their contention that human knowledge originates in the sphere of the moon, the heavenly body nearest to the earth, a concept categorically rejected by Ibn Taymiyya as gross superstition.[2]

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[1] Naqḍ., p. 31.

[2] Ibid., p 32. The concept of the Active Intellect was initiated by Aristotle, though he was not very clear about it. The concept has given rise to well-known controversies lasting many centuries. Some see the Active Intellect as a

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As for the view of those who said that knowledge is obtained through a direct divine activity, Ibn Taymiyya sees it as correct, on the basis that God is the Instructor of all knowledge and the Creator of all existence. But, he contends, such a view is only a general statement, lacking a precise explanation of the particular cause of the acquisition of that knowledge. He applies the same judgment to the opinion of those who held the concept of tawallud, which he says is partly true and partly false. If their claim is that the generated knowledge (al-ʿilm al-mutawallid) is acquired solely by man's own capacity, it is definitely wrong. The truth, he says, is that knowledge is acquired in two ways: through the capacity of man, and a certain other cause, as there is a capacity inherent in an arrow to penetrate its target, and a potentiality of the target to be penetrated.

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transcendent entity, identical with the prime mover, and in effect God Himself, a view that was developed by Alexander of Aphrodisias in the second century C.E. The concept was then taken over by Muslim philosophers, beginning with al-Kindī (d. ca. 870 C.E.), and then elaborated further by the subsequent generations of Muslims. Thus, al-Fārābī (875-950), for example, held the view that the Active Intellect is the tenth of the series of the intellects of the universe. The Active Intellect, as the tenth of them, is related to the lunar sphere which is the tenth sphere. This tenth sphere, which is the closest sphere above the earth, is identified also with the angel Gabriel, the agent of revelation. The interaction between the materials emanating from the lunar sphere and the intellective influence generated by the Active Intellect results in the world process, with man, having a fully organized body and rational soul, as the culmination. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1967, s.v. "Islamic Philosophy," by Fazlur Rahman.

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No doubt that intellectual deliberation of a source of proof is by means of a cause, but, he says, the problem here lies in the question whether by mere intellectual cogitation the acquisition of knowledge becomes conclusive or not.[1]

Finally, Ibn Taymiyya sees that the falāsifa's ascription of knowledge to a spiritual being like an "Active Intellect" who is the angel Gabriel is untenable. But he agrees with the implied spirituality of the source of knowledge contained in the word "angel" (malak) which does suggest spirituality. "God administers the affairs of the heavens and earth through the angels who are His emissaries for His command."

Ibn Taymiyya claims that such a concept has been communicated by all prophets, and confirmed in the Qur'ān and the Sunna. But to hold that the Active Intellect is the spirit of the lunar sphere who acts as the sustainer (al-rabb) of the world is definitely false. Even more fictitious is the falāsifa's claim that the worldly affairs and the realm of the elements (ʿālam al-ʿanāṣir) originate as emanation from the Active Intellect and because of it.[2]

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[1] al-Radd, p. 323. Like al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyya held no strong belief in the Ashʿarite doctrine of atomism; but unlike al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyya did not hesitate to acknowledge the existence of the secondary causality in the universe created by God. Peters, Aristotle, p. 203.

[2] Naqḍ., p. 32.

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Qur'ān and Sunna as Non-Inferred Premisses.

Acquired through fiṭra, man's awareness of God is a self-evident truth and a necessarily valid knowledge. This is also the case with man's general consciousness of the divine attributes, for example that God is the Almighty and the Unique, that He is absolutely unparalleled by anything else. Man's more particular information about God--as, for example, that He created the universe in six days, and that He dwells on His Throne (ʿarsh)--are known only by way of traditional authority through "hearing" (al-samʿ) from God.[1] This authority was brought about by the prophets in the form of the holy scriptures like the Qur'ān and the Torah.[2]

Scriptural truth, therefore, is, non-inferred and self-evident truth. It is of the same value as intuitive knowledge acquired through fitra. "The Qur'ān and Sunna are, in general and in every respect, the only proofs that would lead people to truth."[3] Man's intellectual activities--cogitation, inference, reasoning, reflection--will never lead to truth unless they are based on scriptural precepts like the Qur'ān, the highest proof for truths, as self-evident and non-inferred premisses. If rational deliberation is so con-

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[1]Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[2]See Qur'ān 7:53, 10:3, 13:2, 25:59, 32:4, 57:4.

[3]Naqḍ, p. 33.

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ducted, it would necessarily result in true knowledge and guidance.[1]

But Ibn Taymiyya also reminds us that a correct method of deliberation should not be impaired by satanic resistance. This is why religion requires one who wants to study the Holy Book to seek God's protection from the cursed satan, the source of evil and delusion.[2]

Consequently, he denies that philosophical speculation--intellectual activity without scriptural basis--can lead people to any knowledge of truth. Such speculation, for him, would make falsehood look like truth, a satanic dictation. It may be, very rarely, that such an intellectual effort gives information about truth. If this happens, it must come from the angelic dictations.[3]

Ibn Taymiyya cautions a person who studies scriptural proof like the Qur'ān to make the same distinction. Someone may put the Qur'ānic statements in their proper places and meanings so that he understands correctly their inten-

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[1]Ibid., p. 35.

[2]Ibid., p. 32. Reference here is made to Qur'ān, 16:98, "And when you recite the Qur'ān, seek protection with God from the cursed satan." Thus, the famous formula of "protection seeking" (*isti'ādha*), "*A'ūdhu bi 'llāh min al-shayṭān al-rajīm*," meaning, "I seek protection with God from the cursed satan," that Muslims utter before reciting the Holy Book.

[3]*Naqḍ*., p. 33.

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tions and finds guidance in them; or he may not understand adequately those statements, or he may put them improperly out of their contexts so that he becomes misled by them.[1] Thus, even studying the source of truth itself is susceptible to the interference of either angelic or satanic forces.

Deliberating a proof of truth such as a holy book is like looking at the crescent moon: people may or may not see it. They may not see it because, for instance, of nyctolapia in their eyes. So is the case with blind-hearted people who study the Qur'ān--they will never be able to see truth in it. Therefore, he remarks, the Sharī'a demands from people to do something that would necessarily induce the causes leading to truth to be sent down to their hearts, and at the same time would ward them off the withholding causes. Dhikr is the most conducive for human guidance and wisdom, just as the most deleterious cause is the ghafla (negligence) of God the Almighty.[2]

Nevertheless, and coming full circle, Ibn Taymiyya still advocates that while dhikr is the fountain of true knowledge, and while it is commendable that taṣawwuf encour-

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[1]Ibid., p. 33; See Qur'ān 17:82, "Thus, step by step, We bestow from on high through this Qur'ān all that gives health and is a grace unto the believers, the while it only adds to the ruin of evildoers," and 2:26, "He misleads many thereby, and He guides many thereby; and He misleads thereby only the disbelievers."

[2]Naqḍ., p. 34.

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ages people to do dhikr as the gate to gnosis (ma'rifa), such ritual, he says, is good only as long as it is accompanied by reflection on the Qur'ān and the Sunna, and by adhering sincerely to the Sharī'a. Moreover, if a person does dhikr in accordance with the Sharī'a, divine knowledge will accrue in his heart, so that it will develop many virtues which cannot be attained by the falāsifa's mere reflection on created objects. In short all true human knowledge originates only from man's consciousness of God, because He is the only One Who is truly self-evident and not capable of being cogitated. The religious tenets are self-evident truths, and the scriptural proofs should be accepted as non-inferred premisses.[1]

Nevertheless, Ibn Taymiyya holds that the divine teachings as embodied in the holy books are, as mentioned in the Qur'ān itself, open for contemplation (tadabbur) and deliberation. Thus we have the trilogy of the causes of human wisdom: dhikr, which is the greatest of all virtues; tafakkur, reflection on the created universe; and tadabbur, deep contemplation of the meaning of the divine teachings.[2]

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[1]Ibid., p. 35.

[2]Ibid. The mentioning of the primacy of dhikr as the highest religious virtue is an indirect reference to Qur'ān 29:45, "And remembrance of God is surely the greatest," and of tafakkur to 4:191, "And they reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth. . . ." and of tadabbur to 4:81, "Will they not, then, contemplate upon the Qur'ān? Had it

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In accordance with these arguments, Ibn Taymiyya maintains that knowledge about God is more likely to be attained by faith and religious experience than by any other means. One who is more conscious of God, who worships Him most obediently, prays to Him most sincerely, and remembers Him most contstantly, his self-evident knowledge about matters divine is also the firmest and the strongest.[1] This conforms to the doctrine that dhikr is the highest virtue.

Thus, the human constitutional or natural fiṭra is not enough and should be complemented by the sent-down fiṭra (al-fiṭra al-munazzala), i.e., the revealed religion. Religion is indispensable, because the constitutional or natural fiṭra grasps truth only in a general sense. Religion gives the detail and provides the elaboration of truth, vindicating the constitutional or natural fiṭra.[2] The prophets

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been from anyone other than God, they would surely have found therein much disagreement."

[1]Ibid., p. 39.

[2]Ibid. The identification of fiṭra with the revealed religion, particularly Islam, is implied, as indicated earlier, in Qur'ān 30:30, "And so, set your face for the true religion, as you incline naturally towards truth in accordance with the fiṭra from God, in which He has created men," besides a ḥadīth, as also suggested above, which says that man is by nature a Muslim, only that his parents may make him otherwise. It is also interesting to note that lexicographically the word "fiṭra" is sometimes directly rendered as Islamic religion. See J. G. Hava, S. J., al-Farīd, Arabic-English Dictionary, 1982, s.v. fiṭra. Cf. al-Ṣābūnī, Ṣafwa, 3:478.

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were sent by God to humankind to complete their own fiṭra which, in fact, is the core and the reality of their humanness.[1]

Salafism and Sunnism.

The truth of the Qur'ān and Sunna, as we have seen, is for Ibn Taymiyya a priori, non-inferred truth. A scriptural premiss, therefore, is the end of the chain of premisses and propositions in logical arguments, as such sacred premiss is to be considered self-evident and necessarily true. Despite this, Ibn Taymiyya argues, as we have also already seen, that scriptures are capable of being contemplated. Even more, contemplation of the scriptural teachings is commanded by the Qur'ān itself, and is considered to be one of the main sources of human wisdom and guidance.

Nevertheless, by insisting on the necessity of contemplation, tadabbur, Ibn Taymiyya did not intend to allow anyone to interpret scriptures along the lines of kalām, not to mention falsafa, methodology. In fact, ta'wīl, the metaphorical or allegorical interpretation followed by the mutakallimūn and, especially, the falāsifa, is condemned by Ibn Taymiyya as one of the worst bid'as. The mutakallimūn, not to mention the falāsifa, saw that ta'wīl is especially

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[1] Amrāḍ al-Qulūb wa Shifā'uhā, (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salafiyya, 1386 A.H.), p. 29.

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needed for the Qur'ānic verses known as al-mutashābihāt (ambiguous). Many of those verses describe God in anthropomorphic terms--that God has hands, dwells on His Throne ('arsh), loves, hates, can be pleased or annoyed, etc. On the other hand, the Qur'ān is also emphatic that God is not comparable to anything among created beings.[1] For the mutakallimūn and the falāsifa, the literal meaning of these mutashābihāt is rationally unacceptable, for it would result in anthropomorphism and contradict other verses.[2] Thus the

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[1]For the relevant Qur'ānic verses, see, for example, 5:67, 23:71, 10:3, 13:2, 57:4, 2:195, 3:57, 3:31, 5:122, 47:28, 112:4.

[2]The controversy over the subject of ta'wīl has had a long history. The fact that some Qur'ānic verses are precise (muḥkamāt) in meanings and others are ambiguous (mutashābihāt) is stated in the Qur'ān itself (3:7) that reads, "He (God) is the One who sent down to you (Muḥammad) a Holy Book; among its contents are precise verses that constitute the basis of the Book, and others which are ambiguous. But those in whose hearts is perversity would pursue the ambiguous of it, with the purpose of spreading discord and with the purpose of making its ta'wīl, whereas nobody knows its ta'wīl except God, and those who are deep in knowledge say, 'We believe in it; all is from the presence of our Lord.' But none would listen to the reminder except those who have reason."

There is another way of reading the text, changing the punctuation mark of the clause, "those who are deep in knowledge". The other way is, ". . . whereas nobody knows its ta'wīl except God and those who are deep in knowledge, all say. . . ." Ibn Rushd allowed both versions, each in accordance with its relevant audience. The first vesion is appropriate for the common people (al-'awāmm) as it emphasizes the prerogative of God to make ta'wīl of the ambiguous verses. But as for the elites (al-khawāṣṣ), they should follow the second version, thus sharing with God in knowing the secret meanings of the scripture and the essence of truth. These are the falāsifa or the ḥukamā' (the wise people),

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method of kalām and falsafa is to bring forth their metaphorical senses, interpreting them rationally, implying that reason is above revelation.

For Ibn Taymiyya the ambiguity of some verses in the Qur'ān is only relative. A verse may be ambiguous to one reader and precise for another. It could happen that someone finds a verse ambiguous but, after some contemplation, the meaning of that particular verse may be unveiled to him. Ibn Taymiyya argues that all of the Qur'ānic verses are precise, basing his contention on a statement in the Qur'ān 11:1, "This is the Holy Book, whose verses have been made precise (uḥkimat) and explained in detail from the presence of the

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that is, the "people of demonstration" (ahl al-burhān). Ibn Rushd even argued that it is religiously forbidden (ḥarām) for al-khawāṣṣ to follow the first version of the reading, as that would mean a negligence of religious duty. The ḥukamā' should live up to their intellectual responsibility. On the other hand, it is ḥarām for al-'awāmm to read the verse in the second version, as that would mean transgression of the religious limit set for them.

Ibn Rushd thus harshly criticized al-Ghazālī whom he charged with having mixed up the two methods and given permission for even the laymen to make interpretation. For Ibn Rushd that was the great mistake of al-Ghazālī. But Ibn Taymiyya rebukes the methods of both al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd. For him both men had misunderstood the meaning of the word "ta'wīl". He says that for the Salaf the term "ta'wīl" means the unveiling or the carrying out of the realities behind the mutashābihāt, which is indeed the prerogative of God. Examples of such things are the reality of God's essence, the moments and conditions of the day of resurrection, and the nature of Paradise and Hell. Thus, giving the term "ta'wīl" such meaning, Ibn Taymiyya allowed only the first way of reading the above verse. Ibn Rushd, Faṣl, pp. 36-39; al-Ḥaqq wa 'l-Bāṭil, p. 98.

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all-wise, the all-aware." Therefore, if the Qur'ānic verses are to be understood correctly, they should be understood in their proper contexts.[1]

Ibn Taymiyya rejects the kalām and falsafa method of ta'wīl, and refuses to accept the contention of the mutakallimūn and falāsifa that the expressions in the Qur'ān are either literal (ḥaqīqī) or allegorical (majāzī). He holds that the term ḥaqīqī and majāzī were innovations (bida') after the third generation. The Companions of the Prophet and their Successors (al-tābi'ūn) never spoke about those concepts, and neither did the Salafī prominent scholars like Mālik, Abū Ḥanīfa, and al-Shāfi'ī. Neither are the leading grammarians, notably Sībawayh, reported ever to have talked about such concepts.[2]

The method of ta'wīl followed in kalām and falsafa is opposed to the sound fiṭra, because the kalām and falsafa understanding of the term "'aql" (reason) does not conform to the intention of the Qur'ān--their concept of 'aql was a bid'a, against the sound fiṭra, and condemned by religion.[3] Ibn Taymiyya says that the meaning of the term "'aql" "in the language of the Muslim people" does not correspond to

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[1] al-Ḥaqq wa 'l-Bāṭil, p. 98.

[2] al-Īmān, ed. Muḥammad Khalīl Ḥarās (Cairo: Maktaba Anṣār al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1972), p. 75.

[3] al-Nubuwwāt, p. 158.

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the Greek concept adhered to by the mutakallimūn and falāsifa. The word "ʿaql" is the verbal noun (maṣdar) of the verb ʿaqala, the meaning of which is evident from the Qur'ān 13:4, "Verily in such things (natural phenomena) there are signs for those who reason (yaʿqilūn)." For Ibn Taymiyya, ʿaql is in fact synonymous with the term "gharīza" (instinct) which is also fiṭra that God implants in human nature and by which man conceives truths.[1]

Ibn Taymiyya mentions al-Ghazālī and the mutakallimūn as maintaining that ʿaql is an independent entity, as if it were similar in meaning to the agent noun "ʿāqil", the doer of reasoning. This he sees as stemming from al-Ghazālī's idea that the world of reality consists of three elements: reason, soul, and matter. Al-Ghazālī called reason "the world of omnipotenece" (ʿālam al-jabarūt), soul "the world of angelic power" (ʿālam al-malakūt), and matter "the world of possession or kingdom" (ʿālam al-mulk). Ibn Taymiyya says that all of these notions are nonsensical, and have no ground whatsoever in the Qur'ān and Sunna.[2]

Since Ibn Taymiyya understands ʿaql as the same as, or inseparable from, fiṭra, his logical conclusion is that religion, which is also a form of fiṭra, is also ʿaql. Thus

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[1] al-Furqān bayn Awliyā' al-Raḥmān wa Awliyā' al-Shayṭān (Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1382/1962), pp. 88-89.

[2] Ibid., p. 89.

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the issue of whether reason should have primacy over revelation or the other way around is meaningless. Nevertheless, if the term ʿaql should be understood in the kalām and falsafa sense--that is, ʿaql as an independent reasoning or rationality--Ibn Taymiyya is categorical in his contention that religious proofs, especially those in the form of sacred texts from the Qur'ān and Sunna, should be given clear primacy over independent reason. He says that such was the way of the Salaf. "The rational for us is what conforms to their guidance, and the irrational is what is opposed to it." And "there is no way to know guidance and its method except by following their trails (āthār)."[1] He declares the reasoning of the kalām and falsafa as simply false.

However, it is interesting to note that, according to Ibn Taymiyya, the Qur'ān also suggests that reason and revelation may not be identical, although they are mutually supportive. This he infers from the fact that the Qur'ān uses both the terms "āyāt" (signs) and "nudhur" (warnings), as, for example, 10:10, "Signs and warnings will never benefit those who disbelieve." Ibn Taymiyya understands "signs" as religious precepts that could be discerned rationally, and "warnings" as those scriptural precepts "al-samʿiyyāt"

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[1]Ibn Taymiyya, as quoted by Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, Qawāʿid al-Manhaj al-Salafī (Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1396/1976), p. 26. Cf. Naqḍ, p. 130.

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("things accepted on authority") which should be understood in their literal meaning. An example of the nudhur is the terrible torture (ʿadhāb) that will befall evildoers in the hereafter. Because man cannot know the existence of such tortures by his own reasoning, it is not for God to punish people unless a prophet has been sent to them.[1]

Even so, Ibn Taymiyya's concepts of "signs" and "warnings" do not necessarily contradict his basic argument that religion is always rational, and that the rational is consistently in conformity with religion. It is for this reason that the Salaf, those who were logically as well as historically the most knowledgeable of all people in Islamic teachings, never made any interpretation of the sacred texts. "One of the greatest favors of God to those people," he says, "was that they clung firmly to the Holy Book and the Sunna." Among the basic principles they followed unanimously was that they never allowed anyone to counter the statements of the Holy Book, neither with his personal opinion, nor with his taste (dhawq), his reason, his logic, or his intuition.[2] He also claims that the Salaf did not even set apart the religious tenets into principles (uṣūl) and branches (furūʿ).[3]

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[1] al-Nubuwwāt, p. 173. Cf. Qur'ān 17:15.

[2] al-Ḥaqq wa 'l-Bāṭil, p. 23. [3] Ibid., p. 86.

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Concerning the attributes of God, one of the most controversial topics of religious discussion, Ibn Taymiyya describes that the way of the Salaf was to believe whatever God mentions and calls Himself in the Holy Book and in the Prophetic statements, without increment or diminution.[1] The evidence that the Salaf followed such a method is that they transmitted to us the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth in a manner that would have been appropriate only for those who sincerely accepted the validity of those sacred proofs, who fully believed in their message and wholeheartedly approved without the slightest doubt or the smallest suspicion of origin.[2]

In short, the way of the Salaf was simply to confirm God's attributes and names together with whatever meaning they signify, in accordance with the literal expression (ẓāhir) of the scripture "without asking how" (bi lā kaifa).[3] This is true because for the Salaf knowledge of God cannot be approached by applying analogical reasoning or syllogism, since nothing is similar to God--He is not analogous to any of created being.[4]

Ibn Taymiyya's conviction of the authority of the Salaf is for him sanctioned by the fact that those people are re-

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[1] Naqḍ, p. 2. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 6

[4] Bayān Muwāfaqat Ṣarīḥ al-Ma'qūl li Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl, (at the margin of Minhāj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya), 4 vols. (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Kubrā al-Amīriyya, 1321 A.H.), 1:14.

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ferred to in the Qur'ān as "the foremost and the first" (al-sābiqūn al-awwalūn), consisting of the Emigrants (al-muhājirūn), the Helpers (al-anṣār), and the Successors (al-tābi'ūn) who followed in the footsteps of their predecessors "in good manner" (bi iḥsān), and were promised paradise.[1] Their method was the the method of the true believers who have pleased God.[2]

Since happiness in this world, as well as in the hereafter, is attained only by leading a life following the prophets of God, the people who deserve most happiness are the most knowledgeable about the traditions of the prophets and the most faithful to the prophetic tenets. Such were the redeemed ones (al-nājūn) from all religions.[3]

Such are the People of Tradition and Ḥadīth (ahl al-sunna wa 'l-ḥadīth) in the Muslim community. Having been faithful to the Prophetic Traditions, ahl al-sunna could not have agreed among themselves on something in opposition to the consensus of the Companions of the Prophet. It was their principle that they would not give any a priori judgment to

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[1]See Qur'ān 9:100.

[2]Naqḍ, p. 1. See Qur'ān 4:115, "And as to him who opposes the Prophet after guidance has become clear to him, and follows the way other than that of the believers, We shall let him pursue the way he is pursuing and shall cast him into Hell; and an evil destination it is."

[3]Naqḍ, p. 24.

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anything known not to have come from the Prophet until they knew the intention of the concerned speaker.[1] They were always united among themselves, holding fast to the consensus of the majority (al-jamā'a). They were redeemed by God, as "the hand of God is always with the majority." The individual members of their community may not have been, and indeed were not, infallible, but the community as a whole could not have agreed on error. Therefore their ijmā' was valid ijmā' and was infallible. Thus it was the third source of authority after the Qur'ān and Sunna.[2]

One reason for the normativeness of the Salaf is, then, their proximity to the Prophet. For Ibn Taymiyya it is quite plausible that the closer a generation was to the time of the Prophet, the greater the possibility of its having had correct understanding of the Prophetic Traditions. This is consistent with a statement by the Prophet himself that the best generation was his generation, and then the generations succeeding his. Ibn Taymiyya mentions a Ḥadīth saying that a great era will not arise unless it will be followed by worse eras, until the day of judgment. Thus the human community is ever deteriorating. There have been controversies over

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[1] al-Muntaqā min Manāhij al-I'tidāl fī Naqḍ Kalām Ahl al-Rafḍ wa 'l-I'tizāl, an abridgment of Minhāj al-Sunna by Muḥammad al-Dhahabī (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salafiyya, 1374 A.H.), pp. 156 and 82.

[2] Ibid., pp. 417-418; Majmū' Fatāwā, 22:360.

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whether the Prophet mentioned the fourth generation or not, but all scholars agreed that the third generation had exemplary Muslims.[1]

For Ibn Taymiyya it is only natural that the best community after the Prophet's was the community of the rightly-guided caliphs (al-khulafā' al-rāshidūn). The Prophet himself had said that Muslims should stick firmly to and follow closely first his traditions and then the traditions of the caliphs after him.[2] But the authentic traditions were not by any means limited to those of the four caliphs. For Ibn Taymiyya, all of the Companions could have followed only the valid way: "I have contemplated this matter as God permitted me, and I found that the Companions were the most knowledgeable among the Muslim community." "They were the most conversant (with the true Traditions)."[3] Besides, all of the Companions were included in the "foremost and the first" mentioned in the Qur'ān, and God has praised them highly in many places in the Holy Book. As for the third generation, the Qur'ānic verse Ibn Taymiyya refers to for his concept of the Salaf said that they followed the Companions "in good manner" (bi iḥsān). Their traditions were

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[1] Naqḍ, pp. 129-130. [2] Majmū' Fatāwā, 22:234.

[3] Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, al-Qiyās fī al-Shar' al-Islāmī (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salafiyya, 1346 A.H.), p. 73.

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valid with some qualifications, particularly the extent of their sincerity in adhering to the authentic traditions of the Companions. It is this sincerity which made them pleasing to God so that they were assured of Paradise.[1]

The consideration of the first three generations of the Muslim community as authentic constitutes the temporal concept of Salafism. Ibn Taymiyya combines this temporal concept with the spatial one by taking al-Madīna, the City of the Prophet and the original seat of the Salaf, as the exemplary city and the source of Salafī inspiration.[2]

The Way of the Medinese.

The most ideal place on earth within the first three generations of the Muslim community, quite naturally, was the City of the Prophet, al-Madīna. According to Ibn Taymiyya, the 'ulamā' never considered the consensus of the community of any city as having religious authority, "not of Mecca, nor Kūfa, nor Baṣra, nor Damascus, but only the consensus of the Medinese."[3]

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[1] al-Muntaqā, pp. 66-67. Ibn Taymiyya quotes the Qur'ānic verses that praise the Companions, 5:55; 8:61-62; 9:10, 71, 117; 24:55; 39:33-35; 48:18, 29; 59:10.

[2] Ibn Taymiyya wrote a special work on the subject, titled Madhhab Ahl al-Madīna, ed. Zakariyyā 'Alī Yūsuf. (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Imām, n. d.).

[3] al-Madīna, p. 20.

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However, he says that the ways of the Medinese were religiously authoritative only up to the third generation of the Muslim community. As regards their ways afterwards, scholars agreed that they were no longer authoritative because, says Ibn Taymiyya, there were accomplished scholars in Islam in many other cities than Medina. The Medinese sticked to the school of Mālik ibn Anas until the beginning of the sixth century A.H., but then came the Rāfiḍites from the east and other places as well to instigate and propagate bid'as opposed to the Holy Book and the Traditions.[1]

According to Ibn Taymiyya there were five major cities where great Companions of the Prophet lived or emigrated and spread wisdom and faith. Those are the two Ḥarams (Mecca and Medina), the two Iraqs (Kūfa and Baṣra), and al-Shām (Damascus). It was in these cities that the sciences of the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth, jurisprudence, and other branches of knowledge related to Islam arose and developed. But all these cities, except Medina, produced grievous bid'a fundamentally opposed to the true religion. From Kūfa emerged Shī'ism and Murji'ism (irjā'), which then ran rampant elsewhere. From Baṣra arose and radiated Qadarism, Mu'tazilism, and Ṣūfism. Damascus was known for its role as the birth place of the Nāṣibites (al-nawāṣib) who directly opposed to the Shī'ite

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[1]Ibid., p. 21.

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Rāfiḍites in their attitude towards the first three caliphs and to ʿAlī, the fourth caliph. While the Rāfiḍites rejected the three caliphs and glorified ʿAli, the Nāṣibites exalted the first three caliphs while downgrading ʿAli. Damascus also produced the ideology of Jabarism, which was to be the counter-ideology to Qadarism. Jahmism was still the worst of all innovations--it appeared for the first time in Khurāsān, in the last days of the tābiʿūn era, after the death of the pious Umayyad caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.[1]

The development of a bidʿa in a city was consistently proportionate to the distance of the city from Medina: the greater the distance of a city from Medina, the farther the bidʿa there departs from the right path.[2]

Ibn Taymiyya also notes that after the killing of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, the third caliph, the first bidʿa surfaced immediately in the form of al-ḥarūriyya, which was the ideology of the extremists who fled to and took refuge in the village of Ḥarūrā', near Kūfa, and fought against 'Alī, the fourth caliph. Then appeared tashayyuʿ (Shiʿism), the ideology of those who were fanatically attached to ʿAlī.[3] Medina also witnessed a version of Qadarism, but its proponents

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[1]Ibid., pp. 21-22.

[2]Ibid. Cf. al-Julaynid, al-Imām, p. 247.

[3]al-Madīna, p. 22.

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were despised and sharply censured by other Medinese. In any case, says Ibn Taymiyya, the Prophet himself guaranteed that the anti-Christ (al-dajjāl) will never find the way to come into his city.[1]

All leading scholars, particularly al-Shāfiʿī and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, (the founders of two other schools of thought), recognized that Mālik ibn Anas--having been a Medinese--was famous for the affinity of his school of thought to the way of the Medinese.[2] The Medinese of the following generations continued to be in the Mālikī school, pursuing the examples of Mālik or his followers from among the fourth generation of Muslims (tābiʿū 'l-tābiʿīn, the Successors of the Successors).[3]

It has been suggested that the ways of the Medinese were authoritative as religious arguments only up to the third generation. However, Ibn Taymiyya warns us to be careful not to take them at face value. Some of their ways were solid and sound enough, others were only preferable. Yet, as a whole, the ways of the Medinese were still relatively more reliable than the ways of the citizens of any other city.

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[1]Ibid., p. 23.

[2]Ibid. Abū Ḥanīfa, on the other hand, is known to have been opposed to Mālik's concept of ʿamal ahl al-ḥadīth (the practice of the people of tradition).

[3]Ibid., p. 23.

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The Medinese generally took their ways directly from the Prophet or from the legacy of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Mālik ibn Anas, their imām, in his book al-Muwaṭṭa' took whole traditions from the chain of authorities ending with ʿUmar. ʿUmar was a wise man who continuously consulted the Companions, particularly with ahl al-shūrā (the members of the consultative body), in all of his policies. The Prophet once said that if there could be a prophet after him, he would be ʿUmar.[1] Al-Shāfiʿī once remarked that Mālik's book was considered the most authoritative, after the Qur'ān.[2]

But that had been the situation only before al-muḥaddithūn (the Traditionists) completed their codifications, resulting in the famous Six Books (al-Kutub al-Sitta). Two of them, known as al-Ṣaḥīḥayn ("The Two Authentic Ones"), by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, have ever since been considered by the Muslims as second only to the Qur'ān in authority, with al-Muwaṭṭa''s authoritativeness diminishing.[3]

Furthermore, al-Shāfiʿī, a former student of Mālik who venerated him, eventually became critical (yet still respectful) of his teacher in many subjects, as he found other,

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[1]Ibid., pp. 28-29. [2]Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[3]Ibid., p. 24. The Six Books are the codifications made by al-Bukhārī (d. 256 A.H./870 C.E.), Muslim (d. 261 A.H./875 C.E.), Ibn Mājah (d. 273 A.H./886 C.E.), Abū Dāwūd (d. 275 A.H./888 C.E.), al-Turmudhī (d. 279 A.H./892 C.E.), and al-Nasā'ī (d. 308 A.H./916 C.E.).

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better-grounded alternatives to his views. In doing so, Ibn Taymiyya says, al-Shāfi'ī risked being unjustly castigated by some fanatics of the school of Mālik. But al-Shāfi'ī persisted in serving the truth by examining all ideas and opinions under the light of the critically-tested sound Traditions, and kept declaring that he himself followed closely the ways of the citizens of Ḥijāz.[1]

It has been suggested that Abū Ḥanīfa is known to have been opposed to Mālik's concept of 'amal ahl al-sunna. Accordingly, Ibn Taymiyya found some people holding that Abū Ḥanīfa, unlike Mālik, al-Shāfi'ī, and Ibn Ḥanbal, did not always give primacy to the Medinese traditions over the traditions of other cities and places.[2] Yet Ibn Taymiyya does not recognize such controversy, and refuses to admit some people's statements that Abū Ḥanīfa, having been an inhabitant of Kūfa, held that the consensus of the Kūfans is always authoritative. For him such a statement was an injustice to Abū Ḥanīfa and his colleagues.[3]

Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya insists that Abū Ḥanīfa was universally acknowledged as the greatest scholar of Islam in his time. He was rightly known as the "man of opinion" (ahl al-ra'y), as he ascribed more weight to analogical reasoning (qiyās) than other scholars did. He was also known as the

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[1]Ibid., pp. 41-42. [2]Ibid., p. 27. [3]Ibid., p. 20.

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one who was yet very faithful to Traditions, although some experts found that some of his transmitters were not reliable.[1] But Abū Ḥanīfa's ra'y should not be compared and equated with the loose individual opinions on religious matters which were later rampant in some Islamic cities. Ibn Taymiyya claims that during the time of Abū Ḥanīfa, the school of ra'y had been only moderate, until the time when "the children of some prisoners from among non-Arab people, mainly 'the converted Israelites,' began to propagate the school of free opinions in religious matters," especially at Kūfa and Baṣra, but also at Medina itself.[2]

It is interesting to note that, for Ibn Taymiyya, the Umayyads were more faithful to Sunna than the ʿAbbāsids.[3] He suggests that one of the most important reasons for the destruction of the Umayyad caliphate was the loose and false opinions on religious doctrines encouraged by falsafa and pioneered by thinkers like Jaʿd ibn Dirham and Jahm ibn Ṣafwān.[4]

Nonetheless, Ibn Taymiyya notes that there were among the ʿAbbāsid caliphs strong supporters of Traditions, such as al-Manṣūr, al-Mahdī, and Hārūn al-Rashīd. These caliphs, like the Umayyads, gave primacy to the traditions of Ḥijāz

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[1] Ibid., p. 24.

[2] Ibid., p. 32.

[3] Ibid., p. 33.

[4] al-Ḥaqq wa 'l-Bāṭil, p. 122.

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over those of Iraq and other places. It was because of their encouragement that Baghdad eventually took over the role of Medina as the center of learning of Islamic wisdom and sciences, especially after the death of Mālik and other prominent 'ulamā' of Ḥijāz. It was from Baghdad that Sunnism was vigorously propagated to all parts of the Islamic world, to al-mashriq (the East) and to al-maghrib (the West). Even Khurāsān, not to mention Baghdad, excelled over Ḥijāz, including Medina itself. Baghdad far outstripped any other city throughout the Islamic world.[1]

Among the Baghdad scholars at that time, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was the most prominent in defending Traditions. He was unrelenting in his conviction that the ways of the Medinese were the closest to the spirit of the Holy Book and the sound Traditions. He was critical of those who did not give proper attention to Ḥadīth, yet he was just in giving everyone his due in accordance with his service to the religion. For example, although Ibn Ḥanbal invariably tended to prefer the Medinese Mālik in religious matters over the Iraqi Sufyān al-Thawrī, he revered the latter as a great scholar and one of the imāms of Iraq.[2]

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was also known for his differences with al-Shāfi'ī on some religious questions, yet he acknowl-

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[1] al-Madīna, p. 33. [2] Ibid., p. 40.

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edged the great services that al-Shāfi'ī had done for Islam, especially in his pioneering efforts to formulate principles of jurisprudence (uṣūl al-fiqh), his useful research of the scriptural texts as to which are al-nāsikh (the abrogative) and which are al-mansūkh (the abrogated), and which are mujmal (generalized) and mufaṣṣal (specific).[1] On the other hand, al-Shāfi'ī admitted Ibn Ḥanbal's superiority in the science of Traditions. He once said to Ibn Ḥanbal, "You know about Ḥadīth more than we do. If you find a sound Ḥadīth, please tell me, so that I may come to you for it."[2]

Thus, Salafism and Sunnism, for Ibn Taymiyya, began in Medina with the Prophet himself and then blossomed, thanks to the Companions and the Successors. But it is Ḥanbalism which instigated the comprehensive, critical codification and selection of Traditions, resulting about a century later in the famous Six Books, with al-Ṣaḥīḥayn by al-Bukhārī and Muslim considered second only to the Qur'ān in authority.

The Problem of Qiyās and Ijtihād.

Because of his methodology, Ibn Taymiyya is best known as the religious reformer who championed the re-opening of the gate of individual inquiry, ijtihād. Having at hand the completed codification of the critically-selected collection

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 31.

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of Traditions, he enjoyed the privilege and luxury of examining all historical Islamic thought under the light of the standards of religious truth, the Holy Book and the Six Books. He then found himself able to say, for example, that even such great Muslim personalities as the "rightly-guided caliphs" made some mistakes in some of their judgments, because they had not known certain sound Traditions relevant to those judgments.[1] He even stated that ʿAlī, the third caliph, made no less than three hundred mistakes.[2]

Nevertheless, Ibn Taymiyya was astonishingly realistic. He says that although there is a compelling religious necessity to know the Traditions as much and as accurately as possible, it is impossible for anyone to encompass the subject. The codifications of the Ḥadīth did not begin until after the era of the exemplary generations, and we cannot assume that these codifications covered everything about the Prophet's life. Even if we were justified in seeing the codifications as comprehensive, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for someone to master all the contents with correct understanding.

Ibn Taymiyya is certain that, despite those codifications, the first generations of Muslims knew more Traditions

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[1] Raf' al-Malām ʿan al-A'immat al-Aʿlām (Cairo: Quṣayy Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, 1387 A.H.), pp. 4-7.

[2] Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, s.v. "Ibn Taimīya."

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than later generations. He says there must have been many sound Traditions known to the first generations which never reached us, or reached us only by an interrupted chain of authorities (munqaṭi'). The first generation's "codification" of sound Traditions in their hearts (memorization) must have been several times more voluminous than what we now have.[1]

In any case, all of the Companions, despite their ignorance of some Traditions, were declared by the Prophet to be the best generation of Muslims, and in the Qur'ān they were promised paradise.[2] That they did not know some Traditions is proof, however, that they, unlike the Prophet, were not infallible. All Muslims are agreed, says Ibn Taymiyya, that the Companions could have committed certain major or minor sinful acts, but that they were forgiven by God, either because they repented, or atoned for their sins with an even greater righteousness, or suffered from some misfortunes and bore them patiently. In short, their imperfections never prevented their being the most exemplary people in the his-

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[1] al-Madīna, p. 7.

[2] See Qur'ān 9:101 (also referred to earlier), "And as for the foremost among the believers, the Emigrants (al-muhājirūn) and the helpers (al-anṣār), and those who followed them in the best possible manner, God is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him; and He has prepared for them paradise beneath which flow rivers. They will abide therein for ever. That is the supreme triumph."

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tory of Islam. Having been promised paradise did not mean that they were free from all sin or mistake. Because the Companions were mostly mujtahidūn (practitioners of ijtihād), their mistakes were unavoidable and hence justifiable.[1]

As far as minor errors are concerned, Ibn Taymiyya argues that even prophets themselves were not entirely exempt. Although the prophets were the only infallible human beings, their infallibility applied only to matters relevant to their duty of delivering the message (tablīgh al-risāla) from God. In other matters the majority of Muslims allowed prophets to make some mistakes. The prophets were known never to have postponed their repentance once they knew that they had made a mistake. A wholehearted repentance (tawba naṣūḥā), says Ibn Taymiyya, is always accepted by God, and, as the Salaf said, it would make the position of the repentant even more honorable to God, like the case of the Prophet David.[2]

Even though making mistakes cannot be avoided by a mujtahid, it does not mean that ijtihād should be discouraged. This is particularly true for the authorities. In fact, ij-

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[1] al-Muntaqā, pp. 219-220 and 390.

[2] Awliyā', p 59; al-Muntaqā, p. 155; Manṣūr Muḥammad Muḥammad ʿUways, Ibn Taymiyya laisa Salafiyyan (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍa al-ʿArabiyya, 1970), p. 255.

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tihād can only bring goodness, since a mujtahid will always be rewarded, regardless of whether he is right or wrong in the result of his inquiry. It has been confirmed in al-Ṣaḥīḥayn that if an authority makes an ijtihād, he will get a double reward if he is right, and a single reward if he is wrong.[1]

According to Ibn Taymiyya there are some different opinions among Muslims about ijtihād. The Qadarites among the Mu'tazilites and the mutakallimūn held that ijtihād cannot help but bring about truth because, they argued, God has set for every truth in every subject a clear-cut proof that a true mujtahid should be able to discern.

A second opinion was that of the Jahmites, the Ash'arites, and some jurists of the four madhhabs, who held that a mujtahid could either grasp the truth or miss it--it could go either way. If he succeeded in his ijtihād, they maintained, he would be rewarded; but if he failed, it was up to God either to punish or forgive him.

A third opinion held that not every person performing an ijtihād can find truth. But if he should make a mistake, God would not punish him, unless he intentionally ignored the religiously commanded acts (al-ma'mūrāt), or committed the religiously forbidden acts (al-maḥẓūrāt). This was the

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[1]Awliyā', p. 56.

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opinion of the Salaf and the conviction of the ahl al-jamā'a, and for Ibn Taymiyya the best view of ijtihād.[1] The idea of the Salaf and the ahl al-jamā'a was that God will not require a person to perform an obligatory act except in accordance with his capacity.[2]

An ijtihād cannot be invariably right because by its nature it entails analogical reasoning (qiyās). The Companions of the Prophet are known to have formed opinions in religious matters based on qiyās. It is true that some of them condemned qiyās if it was definitely opposed to the fixed text (al-naṣṣ al-qāṭi'). They also rejected the qiyās based on propositions which have no connection between the major and the minor premisses which would make up the pivot of the judgment (manāṭ al-ḥukm). That would be false qiyās.[3]

Ibn Taymiyya insists that qiyās is still better than taqlīd.[4] Furthermore, all religious principles are analogous (qiyāsī) in the sense that they are in conformity with sound analogical reasoning.[5] He mentions as an example the decision of 'Umar and 'Uthmān not to distribute the farm lands in Syria and Iraq to the warriors who had conquered them. This decision was opposed to what the Prophet had done with

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[1] al-Muntaqā, pp. 320-321.

[2] Ibid., p. 231. Cf. Qur'ān 2:286, "God will not burden an individual except in accordance with his capacity."

[3] Ibid., p. 157. [4] Ibid., p. 156. [5] al-Qiyās, p. 7.

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the confiscated farm lands of Khaybar, but it conformed to the practice of the Prophet in Mecca after he had conquered that city by force, when he did not distribute the real estate of the Meccans to the warriors as he had done before at Khaybar.[1] That was, for Ibn Taymiyya, an example of valid analogical reasoning (al-qiyās al-ṣaḥīḥ). He defines valid analogy as that "which equates the two analogous things (al-jam' bayn al-mutamāthilayn) and distinguishes the two divergent ones (al-farq bayn al-mukhtalifayn)." The first method is called qiyās al-ṭard (the analogy of conformity), and the second is called qiyās al-'aks (the analogy of opposition).[2]

It could happen that a qiyās, like the one that was the basis of the policy of the two caliphs mentioned above, is both qiyās al-ṭard and qiyās al-'aks, in its relation to two different Traditions. Since both Traditions were valid, the caliphs had the option of following either, and they decided to choose the Prophet's example at Mecca. The performance of the Prophet at Khaybar could not have been intended as an obligatory prescription for Muslims, considering what he had done at Mecca.[3]

Some subjects might appear to be not quite analogous to other subjects. In such cases, analogy would be not permit-

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[1]Ibid., p. 66. [2]Ibid., p. 6. [3]Ibid., pp. 66-67.

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ted. This problem might not be clear to some people and could become a source of differences of opinion. Yet it was impossible for everyone to know the validity of every basis of judgment.[1]

It is interesting that Ibn Taymiyya relates his concept of valid analogical reasoning (al-qiyās al-ṣaḥīḥ) to the concept of "scale" (al-mīzān) in the Qur'ān. It is stated in the Holy Book that God sent His messengers with book, signs (āyāt), and scale, so that mankind may act in justice.[2] The Salaf explained the meaning of "scale" as justice, as it is also declared that the final purpose of all prophetic missions is to establish justice on earth. A scale is also something by which the points of similarity between analogous things, and the points of dissimilarity between antithetical things, are known. The scale is, thus, the middle term of an analogy, the general point common to all premisses. Thus, al-mīzān mentioned in the Qur'ān is actually al-qiyās al-ṣaḥīḥ which, after the Qur'ān, the Sunna, and the ijmā' of the Salaf, is the fourth basis of the religious doctrines. Since sound analogy is equivalent to al-mīzān, Ibn Taymiyya argues that the Qur'ān (and religion [sharī'a] in general) cannot be opposed to reason.[3]

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[1]Ibid.,, p. 6.

[2]See Qur'ān 57:25.

[3]al-Radd, pp. 271-273.

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Accordingly, Ibn Taymiyya advocates sound analogy as the source of justice. Justice, for which God has sent the prophets to mankind, is the foundation of the human social order. "If the affairs of the world are governed with justice, the society will be sound, in spite of the bad individual morality of the authorities." On the other hand, "If the affairs of the world are governed unjustly, the society will crumble, regardless of the personal religiosity of the authorities that would be rewarded in the hereafter." Thus, "worldly affairs will be well established with justice, despite non-religiosity, and will fall apart with injustice, although accompanied by Islam."[1]

This means that an authority who performs ijtihād and reaches a sound conclusion will be rewarded in the hereafter for his performance of the religiously commanded act of ijtihād, while his sound conclusion will result in establishing justice on earth, to bring goodness for all people, including the mujtahid himself. If he makes mistakes, he will still be rewarded in the hereafter for his religious performance, although a wrong ijtihād could result in an injustice in this world.

Ibn Taymiyya argues that the value of an ijtihād is al-

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[1]al-Amr bi 'l-Ma'rūf wa 'l-Nahy 'an al-Munkar, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1396/1976), p. 40.

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ways relative, since the value of reasoning involved in it is also never final. Because performing ijtihād is always commendable and even necessary, no person has the right to oppose an imām or his deputies who perform ijtihād, nor to sabotage the implementation of the decision based on that ijtihād.[1] He even mentions the Prophet as commanding the Muslims to be patient with the injustice of the authorities, ordering them not to rebel against the authorities as long as they pray. He then quotes a Ḥadīth that the Prophet said, "Give them their rights. and ask God your rights."[2]

Because of his insistence on ijtihād, Ibn Taymiyya indicates that fanaticism is one of the most grievous mistakes a Muslim can make. The Companions were often in disagreement with one another, yet they were mutually respectful and tolerant, realizing that no one except the prophets could claim to be absolutely right.[3] This was the case too with all ancient scholars of Islam--for example, the leaders of the four schools of thought in jurisprudence, who disagreed with one another in some problems, yet were mutually respectful. Moreover, they never insisted that people follow their schools. On the contrary, they insisted that a Muslim should follow only the Holy Book and the Sunna. The opinions

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[1] Majmū‘ Fatāwā, 30:407. [2] al-Amr bi 'l-Ma‘rūf, p. 20.
[3] Majmū‘ Fatāwā, 23:252.

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of these leaders are not to be considered absolutely authoritative arguments. If someone finds an opinion on a certain subject in one madhhab which is better grounded than in another, he should take that opinion--it is not necessary to follow one particular madhhab all the time. Such a person cannot be branded a hypocrite, since hypocrisy is ascribed only to him who shows different attitudes towards the believers and towards the infidels. On the contrary, such a person must be more likeable to God and His Prophet than the fanatics of one particular school of thought.[1] Following only one madhhab, Ibn Taymiyya says, was an accidental matter, never a procedure agreed-upon by scholars.[2]

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[1] Ibid., 23:248-249.

[2] al-Muntaqā, p. 157.

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CHAPTER IV

IBN TAYMIYYA ON KALĀM

General Attitude Toward the Mutakallimūn.

The science of kalām was one of the major targets of Ibn Taymiyya's refutation, but he did not write a special treatise on the subject. He discusses kalām in works intended for related subjects, especially the voluminous Minhāj al-Sunna,[1] (with its abridgment, al-Muntaqā),[2] Bayān Muwāfaqat Ṣarīḥ al-Maʿqūl li Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl,[3] and Maʿārij al-Wuṣūl,[4] and numerous treatises and collections of his religious opinions (fatāwā). The fairly short Maʿārij al-Wuṣūl

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[1]Minhāj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya fī Naqḍ Kalām al-Shīʿa wa 'l-Qadariyya, 4 vols. (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kubrā al-Amīriyya, 1321 A.H.).

[2]al-Muntaqā min Manāhij al-Iʿtidāl fī Naqḍ Kalām Ahl al-Rafḍ wa 'l-Iʿtizāl, abridgment of Minhāj by Muḥammad al-Dhahabī (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Salafiyya, 1374 A.H.).

[3]Bayān Muwāfaqat Ṣarīḥ al-Maʿqūl li Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl, 4 vols., published in the margin of Minhāj (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kubrā al-Amīriyya, 1321 A.H.). Also ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, Dar' Taʿāruḍ al-ʿAql wa 'l-Naql, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿa Dār al-Kutub, 1971), first volume completed.

[4]Maʿārij al-Wuṣūl ilā Maʿrifat anna Uṣūl al-Dīn wa Furūʿahū qad Bayyanahā al-Rasūl, published in Majmūʿat al-Rasā'il al-Kubrā, (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Āmira al-Sharafiyya, 1323 A.H.). Trans. into French by Henri Laoust, in Contribution d'Une Étude de la Méthodologie Canonique de Taḳī-d-Dīn Aḥmad B. Taimīya, (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1939).

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is particularly useful as a guide, since it offers his general view of the matter.

Kalām is a fusion of Islamic tenets with Hellenism, so that for Ibn Taymiyya it is a mixture of truth and falsehood. It began as a device in the hands of some Muslim apologists with which to defend their religious principles, especially against attacks by non-Muslims.[1] Then, it developed into a distinctive Islamic discipline which erroneously claimed to be the science of the principles of religion (ʿilm uṣūl al-dīn) par excellence. Ibn Taymiyya categorically rejects that claim as a flagrant bidʿa--condemnable religious innovation. He maintains that the principles of religious doctrines can only be understood through the right concept of the nature of prophecy and the prophetic mission. For him, the Prophet Muḥammad has explained all the aspects of God's teachings needed for true human perception of religion, "its principles (uṣūl), its branches (furūʿ), its inner meaning (bāṭin), its external meaning (ẓāhir), its theory (ʿilm), and its practice (ʿamal)."[2]

All the vagrant trends in the science of the divine subjects in Islam, according to Ibn Taymiyya, sprang from the wrong conception about prophethood, first championed by the Jahmites and the Muʿtazilites, then expanded by other

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[1] al-Fārābī, Iḥṣāʾ, pp. 131-132. [2] Maʿārij, p. 180.

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people of kalām and falsafa. He points out that kalām did not come to the surface until the second century A.H. (eighth century C.E.) when Ja'd ibn Dirham and Jahm ibn Ṣafwān, followed by 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd and Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā', declared their theological doctrines concerning human capacity (al-qadar) and the execution of God's threat (al-wa'īd). Then came Abū al-Hudhayl al-'Allāf, al-Naẓẓām, and Bishr al-Marīsī, "all of whom are heretics."[1]

Ibn Taymiyya then recounts the various estimations made by several factions of Muslim thinkers concerning the nature of the prophetic mission. He says that the Qarmatians (al-Qarāmiṭa) and "the philosophizing people" (al-mutafalsifa) held that the prophets did not know the essence of universal theological science (al-'ulūm al-ilāhiyya al-kulliyya). These people claimed that this science is discernible only by the philosophizing people. They particularly argued that prophethood is a kind of symbolic expression or imagination, in the sense that the prophets addressed themselves to the people concerning truth in symbolic terms and using imaginative approaches. Thus, they saw that prophets were preferred only by common people (al-'awāmm), not by the elect (al-khawāṣṣ) or the people of gnosis (ahl al-ma'rifa) like themselves. This, Ibn Taymiyya says, is the view of the

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[1] al-Muntaqā, p. 502.

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Bāṭinites, and also of al-Fārābī, Bishr ibn Fātik, and the Ismā'ilites.[1]

Ibn Taymiyya hints that Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd, and Ibn Tūmart admitted that the prophets knew the essence of truth, but did not express it to the public. These falāsifa also held the idea of takhyīl (imagination), which says that the prophets explained the truth to the common people in imaginative and allegorical expressions. In fact they held that the prophets told lies to their people.[2] But since the falāsifa found that what the prophets had done was always good and beneficial--it was consistently for the purpose of establishing justice and the welfare of the common people--they concluded that the prophets could not have told lies for the sake of their own preeminence or dominance over other people, but for the public interest (al-kidhb li 'l-maṣlaḥa).[3]

Another group of thinkers said that the prophets knew the truths and explained them, but that the essences of

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[1] Ma'ārij, p. 180.

[2] Ibid. Cf. Fazlur Rahman, Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy, (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1958; Midway Reprint, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 39. Rahman suggests, about the philosophical views on prophecy, that "whether the prophet's imagination figurizes the intellectual and spiritual truth or it receives particular images from the heavenly bodies, it cannot usually represent the naked truth since it is ever prone to symbolization by association of images."

[3] Ma'ārij, p. 182.

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those truths could not be grasped directly from their verbal expressions, but by some kind of interpretation, such as discernment of the implied rationale (al-ma'qūl) of those external expressions; or by spiritual disclosure (al-mukāshafa), philosophical deduction (al-qiyās al-falsafī), or mystical imagination (al-khayāl al-ṣūfī). Whatever in the prophetic sayings is in conformity with those criteria should be accepted, and whatever is not should be either submitted to God (al-tafwīḍ) or given ta'wīl, symbolic interpretation.[1] This was the doctrine of the Jahmites and the Mu'tazilites, and the conviction of the fair-minded (khiyār) people among the Bāṭinites and some falāsifa who still venerated prophets an. declared them above ignorance and lying.[2]

These people--for example, al-Ghazālī, who held that the truth lies between the stubbornness of the Ḥanbalite literalism and the looseness of the falāsifa's liberalism--submerged themselves in the false concept of ta'wīl. Al-Ghazālī believed that truth is not exclusively discerned from traditional authority (al-sam'), but from the light (al-nūr) God throws in the heart, which should be the criterion for either accepting or rejecting tradition.[3] He was the first to fuse kalām with logic (manṭiq) and the first to present

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[1]Ibid., pp. 180-181. See also Minhāj, 1:174.

[2]Ma'ārij, p. 181. [3]Ibid.

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jurisprudence (fiqh) with Greek methodology (see his al-Mustaṣfā). Ibn Taymiyya mentions his al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm as especially dangerous for Muslims because it mixes religion with logical principles of Greek origin, and claims that this method came from the Prophet.[1]

The intellectual position of al-Ghazālī was midway between that of the scholars of Islam and that of the scholars of falsafa: "The scholars of Islam blamed him because of his inclination towards the doctrine of the falāsifa, and the scholars of falsafa denounced him because of the remaining Islamic elements in him, and because he did not totally disengage himself from Islam to accept the views of the falāsifa." Ibn Taymiyya approvingly mentions Ibn Rushd, who said that al-Ghazālī was in fact a fwo-faced person.[2]

Ibn Taymiyya accuses al-Ghazālī of confining the science of divinity (al-ʿilm al-ilāhī) to the falāsifa, the Bāṭinites, the mutakallimūn, and the Ṣūfīs. "He did not know the treatises of the people of Ḥadīth and Sunna, (ahl al-ḥa-

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[1]Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, Ṣawn al-Manṭiq wa 'l-Kalām ʿan Fann al-Manṭiq wa 'l-Kalām, ed. ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār (Cairo: al-Nashshār, 1366/1947), p. 13; al-Radd, pp. 14-15.

[2]al-Nubuwwāt, p. 77; Minhāj, 1:99. Al-Ghazālī seems to have been a major target of criticism by some of his contemporaries. He was accused of heresy or innovation. Al-Ghazālī made an interesting defense of himself in his Fayṣal al-Tafriqa, published in al-Quṣūr al-ʿAwālī min Rasā'il al-Imām al-Ghazālī, ed. with introduction by Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Abū 'l-ʿAlā, (Cairo: Sharikat al-Ṭibāʿa al-Fanniyya al-Muttaḥida, n.d.), pp. 144-181. Cf. Ibn Rushd, Faṣl, p. 48.

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dīth wa 'l-sunna) nor the thought of the jurists (fuqahā'), nor of the prominent figures of the Ṣūfīs." Ibn Taymiyya says that al-Ghazālī knew only the practical aspects of those people, and when he mentioned some of their convictions, he was contradicted by their authorities. Ibn Rushd, like al-Ghazālī, is also accused by Ibn Taymiyya of confining the science of divinity to those of al-Ḥashwiyya, al-Bāṭiniyya, and al-Ash'ariyya, while Ibn Sīnā's discussion of taṣawwuf in one of his works, i.e., his Kitāb al-'Ibārāt, was totally wrong.[1]

All these people were unable to mention a single example where the Companions spoke of doctrines as theirs--they claimed that the Companions had been busy with jihād--and they believed they knew truth the Companions had not known. They said that the Prophet refrained from teaching his Companions the complete science of divinity because he did not want to distract them from holy war.[2] Ibn Taymiyya claims that al-Ghazālī, as well as many other mutakallimūn such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Juwaynī, and al-Shahrastānī finally realized their mistakes and repented.[3]

The ahl al-'ilm wa 'l-īmān (people of wisdom and faith) agree that the prophets have never spoken anything but the

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[1] al-Nubuwwāt, p. 160. [2] Ibid.

[3] Minhāj, 3:68-69.

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truth, and know more than other people do what truth is. Prophets are both truthful and trustworthy.[1] In addition, they explained truth using rational procedures combining methods of tradition (al-sam') and reason (al-'aql). The principles of true religion were sent down by God in His Holy Book, and clarified by the Prophet Muḥammad by proofs (al-adilla) and demonstrations (al-barāhīn). These proofs and demonstrations--by which people understand the theological problems and confirm the divinity of God, His uniqueness (waḥdāniyya), and His attributes--are both rational and apodeictic (yaqīnī).[2]

Some theologists and traditionists (ahl al-kalām wa 'l-ḥadīth), jurists (al-fuqahā') and Ṣūfīs were wrong in their contention that scriptural proofs are only traditional and not rational. Some of the Jahmites, the Mu'tazilites, and the Ash'arites even said that neither the Prophet Muḥammad nor the Companions had clarified the principles of religion (uṣūl al-dīn), either because of their preoccupation with holy war (jihād) or other matters.

The mutakallimūn claimed that their theological works are necessary for Islam.[3] They were divided into several factions: the first group--such as the Jahmites, the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites--presented in their works discus-

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[1] Ma'ārij, p. 181. [2] Ibid., p. 183. [3] Ibid.

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sions about rational theory (al-naẓar), methods of making proof, and the nature of knowledge. They said that rational theory assuredly results in knowledge of truth and, therefore, studying such theory is obligatory (wājib). When they came to discuss what the principles of religion should be, they introduced the theories of accidents (al-aʿrāḍ) and the generation of materials (ḥudūth al-ajsām), borrowed from falsafa.[1]

A second group was aware that such discussion is a bidʿa and would inevitably contradict the Holy Book and Sunna. From such discussion arose the idea that the Qur'ān is created, that God is invisible in the hereafter and does not dwell on His Throne (al-ʿarsh), etc.--the bidʿa of the Jahmites. This second group also wrote works advocating the absolute necessity of holding fast to the Holy Book, the Sunna, and the trails of the Salaf, but they mixed the valid Traditions with apocryphal ones.

When the people of this second group used the Qur'ān as proof, they treated it as the source of traditional authority only, ignoring the fact that the Qur'ān also used rational approaches--for example, its method of presenting proofs of the divinity of God and His uniqueness and of the existence of life after death (al-maʿād). They claimed that be-

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[1]Ibid.; Muwāfaqa, 1:144.

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lief in prophets does not need any rational proof to support it. They were reprimanded by other Muslims and accused of ignorance (jahl), because they failed to mention the premiss that would lead to the conviction that the prophets are rationally trustworthy. Eventually, innovation (bid'a) was ascribed to them, even disbelief (kufr), at least in some aspects of their views on prophecy.[1]

The third group was alert to the extremism of the first two, and said that their methodology was dangerous, that the Salaf had never followed such doctrine. Ibn Taymiyya says this group was right, but spoke too generally, failing to elaborate a viable method leading to truth. In addition, these people adopted some of the methods of the first two groups, in spite of their own statements that those methods are innovations.[2]

There was another group which followed a wrong method in understanding religious principles. Although they accepted the Qur'ānic proof, they mixed it with their own whims. They claimed that they applied the method of good advice (al-mau'iẓa al-ḥasana) consisting of invitation (targhīb) to truth and intimidation (tarhīb) from evil. They rightly acknowledged that the Holy Book contains the best arguments. But they also held that those scriptural arguments are not

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[1]Ibid.; Ma'ārij, p. 183. [2]Ibid., p. 185-186.

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all necessarily demonstrative (burhānī)--some of them are only dialectical (jadalī), that is, powerful arguments only because they are accepted by the interlocutor out of his inability to dispute them, although he does not know if they are true or false. Ibn Taymiyya rejects this view, arguing that all of the Qur'ānic arguments are demonstrative, true in themselves, regardless of whether or not interlocutors accept them.[1]

All of these factions ignored the methodology offered by the Qur'ān in the form of rational proofs and apodeictic demonstration. The mutakallimūn knew that the Qur'ān contains rational proofs for the principles of religion, yet they resorted to Greek philosophical methods such as the theory of accidents.[2]

It is the unwavering belief of Ibn Taymiyya that the Qur'ān, not the science of kalām, contains teachings which deserve to be named uṣūl al-dīn (principles of religion). The Holy Book and the Tradition of the Prophet present the proofs in various ways. The scriptures may propose proofs in the form of simple information (al-ikhbār), admonition (tanbīh), direction (irshād), or rational arguments (al-adilla al'aqliyya). The quintessence of apodeictic proofs and theological insights of the proponents of rational discussion of

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[1]Ibid., p. 188. [2]Ibid., p. 186.

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God have already been contained in the Qur'ān and Sunna through revelation. "No one could have access to that guidance except those whom God guides with His revelations." "All of what have been brought about by the Prophet are above the intellects of all intelligent people, from the ancients and the moderns alike."[1]

As for the mutakallimūn, they "contradicted the Holy Book, diverted from it, and were agreed among themselves to leave it." Their theories of the principles of religion "did not conform to the teachings of the Qur'ān and Sunna, and they were not in agreement on a single principle." Every faction have their own uṣūl al-dīn opposed to each other and to the Revelation and Tradition.[2]

The mutakallimūn, says Ibn Taymiyya, built their science on rational theory (al-naẓar) which they thought would lead to truth. It was indispensable, he agrees, but on the condition that the knowledge of truth is the knowledge of what has been brought about by the Prophet and the method of argument he used, in the form of the divine verses. "Both are in need of each other. This the mutakallimūn hardly realized."[3]

Kalām, as found by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (according to

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[1] Minhāj, 1:174. [2] al-Nubuwwāt, p. 118.

[3] Ma'ārij, p. 193.

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Ibn Taymiyya), gives doubt more than certitude.[1] In his last days, al-Rāzī said,

> I have contemplated the methodologies of kalām and the procedures of falsafa, and I found they will never cure the sick nor satisfy the thirsty. I found that the best methodology is that of the Qur'ān. I read the affirmative argument in it, such as, 'To Him all good statements ascend,' and 'He is the Merciful, who dwells on the Throne.' And I read the negative, such as, 'Nothing is similar to Him,' and 'They will never encompass Him in knowledge. . . . Whoever makes experiment like I have made will assuredly have the knowledge like I have known.[2]

Ibn Taymiyya argues that virtue, happiness, perfection and piety are found only in two things: useful knowledge (al-ʿilm al-nāfiʿ) and good deeds (al-ʿamal al-ṣāliḥ). These principles have been accepted by all sages (al-ḥukamā') of all nations, including the Greeks, the Indians, and the Arabs. He especially quotes Ibn Qutayba who said that for the Arabs wisdom (al-ḥikma) is science and action. The beneficial science is belief in God (Īmān), and virtuous action is submission to Him (islām), and these could be known only from the Holy Book and the Traditions of the Salaf--the Prophet, the Companions, and the Successors.[3]

Ibn Taymiyya's general attitude towards kalām and the mutakallimūn is well illustrated in his approval of al-Shāfiʿī's treatment of them. He says that according to al-Shā-

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[1] al-Ḥaqq wa 'l-Bāṭil, p. 88. [2] Maʿārij, pp. 190-191.

[3] Ibid., pp. 191-192.

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fi'ī, ahl al-kalām "should be beaten with palm branches and shoes and then brought around all clans and tribes, and announced to all people, 'This is the consequence of those who abandon the Qur'ān and take interest in kalām.'"[1] "My stance on the theologians is to cover their faces with scourges and to drive them out of the country." So harsh was al-Shāfi'ī's treatment of the mutakallimūn, because, according to al-Suyūṭī, he saw kalām as directly opposed to the Qur'ān and Sunna. It instigates people to abandon the scriptures.[2]

In his judgment of Islamic factions, Ibn Taymiyya always tries to be fair. Although he says that the Mu'tazilites and the Jahmites were most responsible for initiating and propagating kalām, they are still better than some other factions, particularly the Rāfiḍite Shi'ites. The mutakallimūn, in this case the Mu'tazilites, are more reasonable, more knowledgeable of truth, and more religious than the Rāfiḍites. Among the Rāfidites there are those who are devout, pious, and ascetic, but lying and fornication are more common among them than among the Mu'tazilites.[3] This was because the Rāfiḍites took the worst of the doctrines of several heretics: the doctrine of ta'ṭīl, (denial of the attributes of God) from the Jahmites, the doctrine of human

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[1]Minhāj, 1:181. [2]al-Suyūṭī, Ṣaun al-Manṭiq, p. 31.
[3]al-Muntaqā, p. 328.

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freedom from the Qadarites, added to their own doctrine concerning the imamate of rafḍ (rejection of the authority of the first three caliphs) and tafḍīl (the view that ʿAlī was superior to all caliphs, including the first three).[1]

Even in his harshest criticism, Ibn Taymiyya gives the benefit of the doubt to those he criticizes, applying his own method of ranking people according to their proximity to or distance from the Holy Book and Tradition, the sources of truth in Islam. In fact, he argues that it is the ideology of ahl al-sunna wa 'l-jamāʿa to assess people by their achievements rather than their ascriptive qualities.[2]

Refutation of Kalām Arguments.

We have seen that Ibn Taymiyya condemns the kalām as bidʿa, the source of which was the involvement of the ahl al-kalām in Hellenism, borrowing its methods of establishing the temporal generation of the world (hudūth al-ʿālam) and the existence of the Creator.[3]

Hellenism posed a serious challenge to Islamic faith. In reply to the challenge, the Muʿtazilites did not retreat to formal religious arguments as the traditionalists did but resorted to rational principles. They introduced metaphysi-

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[1]Ibid., p. 503.

[2]Ibid., pp. 246-247.

[3]al-Radd, p. 26.

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cal views into Islamic thought which left a permanent stamp on the science of kalām.[1]

A predominant trait of kalām is its argument from accidents (a'rāḍ) for the creation of the universe and the existence of the Creator. It sees the world as a composite (murakkab) of substance (jawhar) and accident ('arāḍ). The terms matter (mādda) and form (ṣūra) are also used for the corresponding concepts. Any corporeal thing (jism) is a combination (tarkīb) of substance and accident and, therefore, cannot be eternal, since eternity is the corollary of the absolute, and could only be the one and the unique (wāḥid). The world must have begun at a definite time in the past, which means that it was created (ḥādith) from nothing (min al-'adam). The world is contingent (mumkin), since its existence or non-existence is equally possible. The world exists because of a preponderant factor (murajjiḥ) which is the will (irāda) of God, the Necessary Being (al-wājib).

A corporeal thing is never free from "the four situations" (al-akwān al-arba'a): rest (sukūn), movement (ḥaraka), union (ijtimā'), and separation (iftirāq or infiṣāl). A corporeal thing can never be exempt from occupying space (taḥayyuz) and having direction (jiha).[2]

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[1]William Lane Craig, The Kalām Cosmological Argument (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1979), pp. 4-5.

[2]See al-Muntaqā, pp. 80-81. Al-Ash'arī elaborated his

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One important implication of these arguments is the doctrine of some mutakallimūn, especially the Mu'tazilites, that it is impossible for God to be the object of a sensory perception like sight, as being visible would make Him occupy a space (mutaḥayyiz) and be in a direction, which are characteristics of corporeal things. God cannot dwell on His Throne ('arsh) above the skies, and He cannot be conceived as descending to the sky of the lower world, as described in scriptural sources. Any expressions like these in the Holy Book and Tradition should be taken metaphorically.

These kalām premisses led the mutakallimūn to the concept of tanzīh, freeing God from any point of similarity to created things, despite the fact that religion expresses many attributes and names of God. They argued that for God to have attributes would make Him corporeal, as He would be a composite of essence and attribute. Expressions referring to God cannot be understood literally, but interpretation (ta'wīl) should be applied to them. The mutakallimūn were divided into several schools of thought about tanzīh: to what extent it should be applied. The Jahmites denied God's attributes and names altogether, and they were called al-mu-

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kalām arguments using Qur'ān and Ḥadīth in his Risāla Istiḥsān al-Khauḍ fī 'Ilm al-Kalām (Hyderabad: Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Niẓāmiyya, 1344 A.H.). Tanslated with Arabic text by Richard J. McCarthy as The Theology of al-Ash'arī (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953).

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ʿaṭṭila--the adherents of the doctrine of taʿṭīl, the denudation of God from any quality. The Muʿtazilites stripped God only of attributes, not of names. Thus, every Jahmite is a Mu'tazilite, but not vice-versa.[1]

At the other end of the scale were al-muthbita (the confirmers)--those who confirmed God's attributes and names. A group called al-mushabbiha, al-mujassima, or al-mumaththila (the followers of the doctrine of tashbīh, tajsīm, or tamthīl respectively, all of which denote anthropomorphism) went to the extreme of believing that God, having all the attributes and names mentioned in the Holy Book and the Sunna, is like a human being.[2]

Ibn Taymiyya rejects all of the kalām arguments: first, by insisting that such methods of proof were never used by any prophet of God,[3] and by claiming that such methods were unknown to the Salaf from among the Companions of the Prophet and their Successors. He believes the reality of God should not be discussed, neither in affirmative terms (ithbāt) nor in negative terms (nafy), except in accordance with the religious formal texts (nuṣūṣ).[4]

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[1] Minhāj, 1:81 and 114; al-Julaynid, p. 225; ʿAlī Muṣṭafā al-Ghazālī, al-Minḥat al-Ilāhiyya fī Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya (Cairo: Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṣabīḥ, 1383/1963), pp. 12-13.

[2] Minhāj, 1:83.

[3] Dar' Taʿāruḍ, 1:100.

[4] Minhāj, 1:81.

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Some mutakallimūn like al-Rāzī and al-Juwaynī claimed that theirs were the only methods for explaining and understanding the creation, and that those methods are the Principles of Religion (uṣūl al-dīn) that every Muslim should learn. Ibn Taymiyya flatly rejects this claim, saying that even if such methods were correct and acknowledged as such by the Prophet and the believers--since they are known never to have agreed on an error--it does not necessarily mean that such methods are the only way to know God and that Muslims must study them.

It has never been reported that the Prophet and the Salaf discussed these subjects. In any case, the Qur'ān is full of signs (āyāt) which lead to truth and guidance, yet if a person has a correct faith and good deeds without knowing some of the Qur'ānic āyāt--for example, if he is one of the believers who died before the whole revelation was completed, he is excused.[1]

For Ibn Taymiyya, the mutakallimūn were confused as to the true meaning of the term shar' (religion). The term shar' is sometimes applied to the teachings of the Prophet in the Qur'ān and the Sunna. This is its true meaning. "But sometimes it is applied to additional doctrines made by man. This is false, and is forbidden to follow."[2]

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[1] al-Nubuwwāt, p. 44. [2] Ibid., p. 67.

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More significantly, he rejects the argument from accidents as something which cannot be proved externally, not even by the mutakallimūn themselves. He takes as an example the kalām theory of the atom (al-jawhar al-mufrad), which serves, among other purposes, as the basis of proof that God is omnipotent, that nothing can exist or happen unless He causes it to exist or happen. But the theory, to Ibn Taymiyya, also led the mutakallimūn to the bizarre contention that movement cannot be identified as slow or fast, because the atoms of a movement are the atoms of the moving object itself; thus movement and the moving object are, in fact, identical. How, they argued, could a movement be fast or slow, when the object remains the same? They also argued that if it happens that one of two identical things moves faster than the other, it is not because of the difference of their movements, but because of the disparity in the number of their stillnesses (sakanāt).[1]

Such an argument, for Ibn Taymiyya, is sheer obstinacy, as it directly and irreconcilably contradicts reality. Even more bizarre, he says, is the theory of ṭafra (vertical jump) of al-Naẓẓām, who believed that the atomic divisions of a movement are linked one to another by a vertical jump. In fact Ibn Taymiyya says that the ṭafra of al-Naẓẓām was

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[1]Majmū'a Tafsīr, ed. 'Abd al-Ṣamad Sharaf al-Dīn (Bombay: al-Dār al-Qayyima, 1374/1954), pp. 213-215.

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one of the three most fanciful things about kalām (the other two being the idea of aḥwāl of al-Jubbā'ī and the doctrine of kasb of al-Ash'arī).[1]

The theory of ṭafra itself results from the kalām atomism which concludes with the idea that an accidental phenomenon cannot last two successive moments. A day-to-day accidental phenomenon should be seen as a collection or a series of uncountable indivisible single units (atoms) of accidents, each one of which takes place in an indivisible atom of time. The reason behind the theory, Ibn Taymiyya explains, is because al-Naẓẓām believed that if an accident lasted two different moments, it then would not be destructible, or, in other words, it would be eternal. They needed the theory as the basis for constructing the proof that the universe is perishable, and anything that is perishable cannot be eternal and, therefore, must have a creator, who is God. Thus, ṭafra theory is also necessary for the argument

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[1] al-Nubuwwāt, p. 142; al-Muntaqā, p. 48. The term aḥwāl (states, conditions) was used by al-Jubbā'ī and other Mu'tazilites in connection with the theory of God's states of perfection. They said that God's perfection is either because of His very state of being (ḥāl nafsiyya) or because of the inherence of a determinant quality (ma'nā) termed ḥāl ma'nawiyya. See Richard MacDonough Frank, Beings and Their Attributes (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978), p. 124. Cf. Richard MacDonough Frank, "Kalām and Philosophy, a Perspective from One Problem," in Parviz Morewedge, ed., Islamic Philosophical Theology (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), pp. 76-77. For kasb see below, p. 144.

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of the temporal generation of corporeal things (ḥudūth al-ajsām). The theory of ṭafra, according to Ibn Taymiyya, is opposed to sense perception and reason. "Anyone knows that the color of his body at any fraction of a moment is the same as it was a fraction of a moment before." So is the case with the color of the sky, the mountains, the woods, the leaves, etc.[1]

The same line of reasoning is used by Ibn Taymiyya against the kalām argument from contingency and necessity. These are originally philosophical notions borrowed from the pagan Greeks and the Sabeans of Ḥarrān. The methods of kalām and those of falsafa are interchangeable and, in fact, complementary. Al-Shahrastānī, for example, did not know Aristotelian philosophy, but learned it from Ibn Sīnā's falsafa.[2] Kalām arguments are not necessary, since the best method for proving the existence of God and the generation of the world is the intuitive method (al-ṭarīqa al-fiṭriyya) of the Qur'ān. As has been discussed earlier, man's knowledge of God is primarily through, and because of, his own fiṭra.[3]

Man's intuitive, natural knowledge of God is the result of the primordial covenant between God and man as mentioned in the Qur'ān 7:172,

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[1] Tafsīr, p. 213-215. [2] Muwāfaqa, 3:101-102.

[3] Minhāj, 3:100-101.

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> And when thy Lord brings forth their offspring from the loins of the children of Adam, He calls upon them to bear witnesses about themselves: 'Am I not your Lord?' they say, 'Yea, indeed we do bear witness thereto.' Lest you would say on the day of resurrection, 'Verily we were unaware of this.'

Ibn Taymiyya says that the human fiṭra, if it is in sound condition, "necessarily gives witness, due to its very being and by the necessity of its natural reasoning, to the existence of a Creator who is ever-knowing, omnipotent, and wise." It is from this perspective that Ibn Taymiyya understands the spirit and meaning of many Qur'ānic verses--for example, 14:10, "Can there be any doubt about God, the Originator of the heavens and the earth?", and 43:87, "And if you ask them as to who it is that has created them, they are sure to answer, 'God!'. How perverted then are their minds." Moreover, even if the human fiṭra were not sensitive to God's existence during happy times, it would certainly be sensitive during difficult times. Thus the Qur'ānic verse, 17:67, "And when danger befalls you at sea, all those that you are wont to invoke forsake you, except Him." If human fiṭra is not spoiled, man would certainly find in it the love of God, since the source of knowledge of God is the fiṭra-based love of God (maḥabbat Allāh). It is the love of God which is aimed at by observing rituals (ʿibādāt), particularly remembrance (dhikr).

Man's problem is not that he does not believe in the existence of a creator-God--this he naturally senses about. His problem is knowing who the God he believes in really

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is--the one and only true God (tawḥīd), and how he should guard himself from every form of polytheism (shirk). To support his contention, Ibn Taymiyya quotes some Qur'ānic verses, such as 40:12, "That's you! If God alone is invoked, you disbelieve, but if some partner is ascribed to Him, you believe!", and 39:45, "And when God alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the life to come contract with bitter aversion. . . ."[1]

Ibn Taymiyya was especially indignant against the extremism of the mutakallimūn in their doctrine of tanzīh. The mutakallimūn, like the falāsifa, were guilty of relegating God to the position of a mere object of intellectual speculation and abstraction. God's existence, in their system, becomes so abstract that He is deprived of His function as the source of the ethical and moral way of life. For example, the mutakallimūn, particularly the Jahmites and Mu'tazilites, say that it is impossible for God to have the attributes of knowing ('ilm), power (qudra), life (ḥayā), speaking (kalām), pleasure (riḍā), anger (ghaḍab), love (ḥubb), or hate (bughḍ), all mentioned in the Qur'ān.[2] Ibn

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[1]Minhāj, 3:100-101; Muwāfaqa, 3:101-102. For more discussion on Ibn Taymiyya's argument that human fiṭra is the basis for proving God's existence, see al-Julaynid, al-Imām, pp. 327-338. Cf. Fazlur Rahman, The Major Themes of the Qur'ān (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), pp. 24-25.

[2]al-Muntaqā, p. 78.

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Taymiyya could understand the eagerness of the scholastic theologians to purify God from anything that would result in His relativization, but for him the kalām method of tanzīh has inevitably brought them to ta'ṭīl--total denial of God's attributes and names, including those that God Himself mentions in the Holy Book. Such ta'ṭīl would make God so absolute and pure that it in fact becomes impossible for Him to exist. Thus any ta'ṭīl of attributes and names would also end up with the ta'ṭīl of the very existence or the essence of God, which is atheism.[1] Ta'ṭīl is one of the two sources of disbelief (kufr), the other, most common source of disbelief being to ascribe to God a partner (ishrāk).[2]

As regards ahl al-sunna, Ibn Taymiyya says that they accept and believe what God describes about Himself in the Holy Book, where God mentions several of His attributes and names, but the realities of these attributes and names being totally different from those of human beings, although expressed in the same words. Ahl al-sunna attach themselves to the doctrine of ithbāt but without tashbīh, and, at the same time, they cling to the conviction of tanzīh, but without allowing themselves to extreme of ta'ṭīl. Ibn Taymiyya says that the doctrine is best summarized in the Qur'ānic verse, 42:11, "There is nothing like unto Him," (which denies tash-

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[1]Ibid., p. 148. [2]Ibid.

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bīh), and "He alone is all-hearing, all-seeing," (which does away with ta'ṭīl).[1]

Furthermore, ahl al-sunna understand the scriptural proofs concerning God's names and attributes without corrupting (taḥrīf) their meanings, or questioning how (takyīf), or making analogy (tamthīl) to created things.[2] The Qur'ānic proofs, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, should be accepted as a priori, non-inferred statements. Besides, "All rational proofs and apodeictic informations that have been brought about by the Prophet are above the intellects of all intelligent people." Since God's essence cannot be grasped by human intellect, the secrets of His attributes and names mentioned in the Holy Book and Prophetic Tradition are also beyond human intellect. God's qualities and states described in the scriptures should be understood in a way which conforms to His glory and greatness. Thus God, as described in the Holy Book or Tradition, indeed dwells on His Throne above the heavens; descends to the lowest sky (al-samā' al-dunyā) in the last third of every night; will be visible to the eyes of the believers in Paradise; is pointed to on-high in prayer; and so on. These descriptions are in harmony with the divine glory. Less elevating description would clearly

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[1] Minhāj, 1:174.

[2] al-'Aqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salafiyya, 1393 A.H.), p. 5: al-Muntaqā, pp. 102-103.

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debase God.[1] Since it is confirmed from the Salaf that the Qur'ān is the uncreated speech of God (al-kalām al-qadīm), it is indeed uncreated.[2]

The mu'aṭṭila are also called the nufā, the negators, i.e., the advocates of the doctrine of negation (nafy) of God's attributes and names. The extreme among them said that anyone who ascribes qualities to God is an anthropomorphist. The Bāṭinites said that even calling God by His "beautiful names" (al-asmā' al-ḥusnā) is anthropomorphism.[3] This, to Ibn Taymiyya, is a sophistry. Names are there in the Holy Book only to describe some qualities of God. And the verbal expressions of those qualities are also used to describe some qualities of His creatures--for example, the qualities of compassion (ra'fa) and mercy (raḥma) which are used in the Qur'ān to describe God (24:20) and also to characterize the Prophet (9:129). In any case the nufā at least did not negate God's quality of existence (wujūd), which is shared by all creatures. To make a still further ta'wīl of those names and attributes would inevitably result in the complete

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[1] Majmū'a, pp. 7, 14 and 22-28; Minhāj, 1:174; al-Julaynid, al-Imām, pp. 347-349; Sharḥ Ḥadīth al-Nuzūl (Amritsar, India: Maṭba'at al-Qur'ān wa 'l-Sunna, n.d.), p. 65.

[2] al-Munāẓara fī al-'Aqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya, published together with al-'Aqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya (Cairo: al-Maṭba'at al-Salafiyya, 1393 A.H.), p. 25.

[3] al-Muntaqā, p. 103.

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negation of any quality for God. This is why their method of ta'ṭīl in fact makes God impossible to exist.[1]

To Ibn Taymiyya, the problem with the mutakallimūn who held fast to the doctrine of tanzīh in the extreme form which results in ta'ṭīl is that they thought that sharing of the names and attributes between God and man would also lead to the sharing of the essences and meanings of those names and attributes, which is, for him, impossible. The idea that God would share with man the realities of names and attributes because of their doubling in verbal expression is "only a generalized universal notion in the human mind that does not have any existence in the world of reality," and "that which is not there externally is neither there in a generalized, universal form; on the contrary, it is there only in the particularized, specific form."[2]

Most of the disputes among theorists are due to the ambiguities of the meanings they attach to words and terms.[3] Another example of that ambiguity with a fundamental religious implication involves the terms mu'jiza (miracle). The mutakallimūn, especially the Ash'arites, did not know the miracles of the prophets, nor did they understand the difference between miracles and other phenomena. They said that

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[1] Minhāj, 1:174-175; al-Muntaqā, p. 80.

[2] al-Muntaqā, pp. 78-79. [3] Ibid., p. 83.

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miracles are like the supernatural practices of soothsayers and sorcerers, only that other people cannot imitate them. Ibn Taymiyya unequivocally dismisses this notion of miracles.[1] Prophets are not supported by supernatural acts, nor are saints, but rather by the truth they manifest.[2]

The Problem of Human Acts.

Another important aspect of kalām taken up by Ibn Taymiyya concerns the issue of human act, involving the dispute between the Jabarite and Qadarite mutakallimūn. It has been previously suggested that the Mu'tazilites based their theology on five principles: God's justice; His uniqueness; His promise and threat; a grave sinner's position between faith and disbelief; and the principle of commanding good and prohibiting evil. God's justice, combined with His promise and threat, necessitates human freedom if one is to choose his acts responsibly. One of the cardinal doctrines of the Mu'tazilites is the human capacity and freewill which justify a person's being held responsible for his conscious actions during his lifetime. It would be an injustice on God's part to reward someone for good acts or punish him for sins if his actions, good or bad, were all predestined by God.

Ibn Taymiyya could appreciate the Mu'tazilite doctrine

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[1] al-Nubuwwāt, pp. 158-159. [2] Awliyā', p. 69.

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of "al-manzila bayn al-manzilatayn," holding that a grave sinner is not automatically a kāfir as the Khārijites held. But he maintains that committing a sinful act is an indication of weakness of faith (īmān)--since faith decreases and increases, and believers are weak and strong (God loving the strong better than the weak). According to the Qur'ān, a Muslim is a Muslim once he declares that he is so. He is either foremost (al-sābiq) in goodness, or moderate (muqtaṣid), or unjust (ẓālim) to himself, i.e., sinful.[1] Even the hypocrites (al-munāfiqūn) should be recognized as Muslims, in accordance with their own confession.[2]

But this does not mean that Ibn Taymiyya agrees with the Murji'ites. He says that the Murji'ites stood in direct opposition to the Mu'tazlites and the Qadarites by insisting that faith is complete just by attesting (taṣdīq) to it. This is a bid'a of irjā', but such a bid'a is less condemnable than Qadarism. Ibn Taymiyya too gives primacy to faith over acts. He argues that sincerity is the essence of Islam, because the intrinsic meaning of Islam is complete submission to God, and that the basis of Islam in its reality is al-umūr al-bāṭina (internal affairs) without which human acts are futile. But he maintains that the Murji'ites over-

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[1] al-Nubuwwāt, pp. 144-145; Awliyā', p. 33. Cf. Qur'ān 35:32-35.

[2] al-Īmān, p. 300.

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looked the fact that acts, as emphasized in the Holy Book and Tradition, are the fruits of faith.[1]

Ibn Taymiyya did not refute all aspects of Mu'tazilism without qualification. In fact, like the Mu'tazilites themselves, he stands between the extremes of Qadarism and Jabarism, at the same time insisting on human accountability. First of all, he makes clear his claim that the majority of the ahl al-sunna hold the doctrine that man has power and responsibility over his deeds. The Qadarites held the same view, but they went to the extreme of claiming that man's power is the sole determinant of his acts. The Jabarites, contrary to the Qadarites, argued that man's power does not affect his activities.[2]

Ibn Taymiyya claims that most scholars in Islam have agreed that God creates the causes (al-asbāb) and potentialities (al-quwā) for human acts, as for everything else.[3] Man's power affects his acts just as any other cause leads to its effect (musabbab). He vehemently argues against those among the Ash'arites, particularly Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who denied the reality of man's power over his acts, contradicting both reason and revelation. Man is free to choose among

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[1]See al-Tuḥfat al-'Irāqiyya fī al-A'māl al-Qalbiyya (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salafiyya, 1386 A.H.), p. 43; al-Ḥaqq wa 'l-Bāṭil, pp. 31-32; al-Īmān, pp. 16 and 342.

[2]al-Ḥaqq wa 'l-Bāṭil, pp. 31-32. [3]al-Radd, p. 270.

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the causes of action that God creates for him. This is the basis of his responsibility. Ibn Taymiyya criticizes those who denied man's control over his actions, saying they "do not know that God has made measure (taqdīr) for everything and executes that measure in accordance with the causes, upon which human acts and other things are dependent."[1] He flatly rejects a passive acceptance of fate, as he opposes a passive style of life resulting from a wrong concept of tawakkul (trust in God).[2]

Nonetheless, the concept of sabab is not like the philosophical concept of ʿilla which has a necessary effect upon its object.[3] For Ibn Taymiyya, using almost the same Muʿtazlite argument, man cannot realize his acts except with the existence of a preponderant factor (murajjiḥ) or particularizer (mukhaṣṣiṣ). This preponderant factor or particularizer, contrary to the claim of the Qadarites, does not come from man himself, but from God, in the form of the divine volition (irāda). As is the case with God's creation of the world, His creation of human deeds is also volitional,

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[1] al-Tuḥfa, p. 47. Cf. Rahman, Major Themes, p. 67.

[2] al-Tuḥfa, pp. 47-48 and 50.

[3] Although the terms sabab and ʿilla are sometimes used interchangeably, some mutakallimūn distinguished between the two, as sabab for them is the cause which permits, and ʿilla is the cause which necessitates. This is to be seen as one of the important distinctions between kalām and falsafa. Craig, Kalām, p. 11.

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of His free choice (ikhtiyār) and absolute will (irāda).[1]

There are various statements in the Qur'ān concerning human acts which give some people the impression that there is a conflict between God's predetermination and human free-will and responsibility. But Ibn Taymiyya says that "it is established that God creates the act that man chooses consciously, and this is the way of ahl al-sunna."[2] "Any intelligent man knows that we have power over our volitional acts," such as "our movement to the right or to the left, and our beating movement with our hands or feet." Therefore it is not for God to hold someone responsible for an act over which he does not have power.[3]

It is on this ground that Ibn Taymiyya rejects the doctrine of kasb (acquisition) of al-Ash'arī. Out of a desire to mediate between the Qadarites and the Jabarites, al-Ash'arī introduced the concept of kasb concerning human acts. The doctrine states that what is known as a human act is an act of God, but such an act is contingent upon man through his acquisition of it. The Ash'arites distinguished between act (fi'l) or creation (khalq) and acquisition (kasb). They said that kasb is equivalent to the conjunction of the object of power (al-maqdūr, i.e., the human act) with the

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[1] al-Muntaqā, p. 145; Minhāj, 1:214-215.

[2] Ibid., 2:55.

[3] Ibid., 2:16.

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capacity which is created (al-qudra al-ḥāditha), whereas creation (khalq) is equivalent to the conjunction of the object of power with the eternal power (al-qudra al-qadīma).[1] Act or creation belongs to God, and acquisition belongs to human beings. Acquisition, to the Ash'arites, should be sufficient for man to be held responsible for his acts.

For Ibn Taymiyya, the doctrine of kasb is irrational as well as religiously groundless, especially because al-Ash'arī said that though an act is acquired by man, human power does not have any effect either on carrying out the act or on not carrying it out. The majority of the ahl al-ithbāt (the confirmers, i.e., the ahl al-sunna in Ibn Taymiyya's sense) are of the opinion that a human being is indeed the agent (fā'il) of his acts, and his power of choice has an effect on its object, just as the natural power has an effect on nature as its condition and cause.[2]

Ibn Taymiyya appreciates the efforts of al-Ash'arī to solve the problem of Jabarism against Qadarism. But, for him, al-Ash'arī, with his doctrine of kasb, followed the Jahmites, indicating a strong inclination towards Jabarism.[3]

Even more outlandish was the doctrine of the Qadarites. Ibn Taymiyya says that the Qadarites in fact combined ishrāk

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[1] al-Julaynid, p. 420. [2] Minhāj, 2:17.

[3] al-Īmān, p. 103.

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and ta'ṭīl, the two sources of polytheism. Ishrāk is implied in their doctrine that some phenomena, such as man's control over his actions, do not have any creator, but this at the same time implies that there is a creator besides God--man himself. In addition, the Qadarites adhered to the doctrine that God had been hindered ('āṭil) from creating anything until He created the world.[1]

This is similar to the falāsifa's view that God is in fact forever hindered (mu'aṭṭal) from any act of creating things. The view was based on the doctrine that what is there in God's essence, in the falāsifa's cosmology, such as the intellects (al-'uqūl), the spheres (al-aflāk) and the causes (al-'ilal) of the temporally generated things (al-ḥawādith), is in reality not His creation, but simply the necessary consequence of His existence. The falāsifa understood creation as a series of occurrences, a progression that would be impossible for God, since it would abrogate His being absolute. It is clear that the falāsifa were the true mu'aṭṭila--the advocates of ta'ṭīl, the purpose of which was to establish that God is only the condition, not the creator, of the universe. Thus the doctrines of the Qadarite mutakallimūn concerning ta'ṭīl were very close to those of the falāsifa.[2]

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[1] al-Muntaqā, pp. 146-147. [2] Ibid.

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Ibn Taymiyya establishes a definite criterion for classifying the mutakallimūn. According to him, the closer a mutakallim is to the doctrine of falsafa, the farther he is from the Holy Book and the Sunna, the sources of truth. He finds that the mutakallimūn among the latter day thinkers like al-Rāzī and al-Āmidī were the closest to the falāsifa, because of the mixture of Islamic teachings and Hellenism in their kalām. Consequently, on his scale, they were the farthest from truth, below al-Juwaynī; and al-Juwaynī was below al-Bāqillānī, who was in turn below his teacher, al-Ash'arī. Al-Ash'arī, the most famous among the mutakallimūn, was still below Ibn Kullāb, who was the closest among the mutakallimūn to the ahl al-sunna.[1] This is so despite the fact that Ibn Kullāb's doctrine, a mixture of Sunnism and Jahmism, was not free from elements of Hellenism.[2]

More significantly, Ibn Taymiyya does not deny that the mutakallimūn with their arguments were adherents of some sort of monotheism (tawḥīd), what he terms only tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya, which is the admission that God is the sole source of existence. Such tawḥīd was understood, and even advocated, by the ancient polytheists of Mecca, yet it did not prevent them from having multiple deities.[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 148-149. [2] Tafsīr, p. 247.

[3] Minhāj, 2:62. Cf. Qur'ān 29:61, 31:25, 39:38, 43:9.

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Such monotheism is not sufficient. A true believer (mu'min) should also adhere to tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya, which Ibn Taymiyya defines as unreserved acceptance of God's teachings--His commands and prohibitions--including the mentioning of His names and attributes in the Holy Book. The tawḥīd that God demands from His servants is tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya which in itself also contains tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya by worshipping God alone without ascribing anything as partner to Him. "Worshipping God encompasses the highest love wherein humility is implied." "It is the axial pole of the Qur'ān on which it rotates. It incorporates tawḥīd in knowledge and speech, as well as tawḥīd in volition and action."[1]

The mutakallimūn were different in principle from the falāsifa, despite their heavy borrowing of Hellenic methods in formulating proofs. For example, Ibn Taymiyya contrasts the mutakallimūn with the falāsifa in many theological and cosmological doctrines. The people of kalām still adhered to many theological doctrines of the orthodox, like their belief that prophets received direct from God teaching about things that were impossible for ordinary people to know; or their belief that God acts by His volition and potency. None of the mutakallimūn believed that God does not know particulars; or is not omnipotent and volitional. None of them

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[1]Minhāj, 2:62; al-Muntaqā, p. 148.

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held the doctrine that spheres are eternal. None of them denied the resurrection of bodies after death, or held the view that the angels are merely images in the human psyche, like dreams during sleep; nor were there those who said that God's speech was an imaginary voice in the human heart, or those who claimed that what the prophets learned from the unseen (al-ghayb) was no more than an emanation to their hearts from the soul of a sphere; nor did any of them consider "the preserved tablet" (al-lauḥ al-maḥfūẓ) as the soul of a sphere. There were none among the mutakallimūn who shared the falāsifa's conviction that something other than God creates existence, as in the falāsifa's doctrine that the "first intellect" created the contingent things (al-mumkināt), which they called "the pen" (al-qalam).[1]

Despite all that, it is interesting to note that, to Ibn Taymiyya, the Muslim falāsifa, like Ibn Sīna and al-Fārābī, and the Jewish Mūsā ibn Maimūn and the Christian Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī--because of their professed adherence to a prophetic religion--were "intellectually and scientifically more enlightened than Aristotle and his followers from among the ancient peripatetics."[2] In the following discussion we will see in a more detailed, specific way how Ibn Taymiyya presents falsafa, assesses it, and criticizes it.

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[1] al-Radd, pp. 512-513.

[2] al-Muntaqā, p. 148.

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CHAPTER V

IBN TAYMIYYA ON FALSAFA

General Attitude towards the Falāsifa.

When he was discussing philosophy, Ibn Taymiyya always had in mind doctrines of the Muslim Aristotelians and the Neo-Platonists, more specifically those of Ibn Sīnā.[1]

Aristotelianism itself is not necessarily the philosophy of Aristotle but of those who have more or less consciously used the Greek philosopher's doctrine, his conceptual framework, or his method in their systems of thought. Neo-Platonism springs from the philosophic and religious thought of Plotinus (205-270) that reality consists of a series of emanations from the One, the source of all being.

The Muslims developed their own Aristotelianism and Neo-Platonism, generally designated by the Arabized Greek term falsafa, supported by the falāsifa (the philosophers). The most prominent falāsifa included al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and Ibn Rushd.

Ibn Taymiyya sees falsafa as harmful innovation (bid'a) and heresy (ilḥād) to be condemned even more than kalām.

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[1]Sabih Ahmad Kamali, Types of Islamic Thought (Aligarh: Institute of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, n.d.), p. 55.

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He refers to the falāsifa as condemnable innovators (mubtadi'a) and heretics (malāḥida), but he is cautious not to cluster all Muslim philosophers in the same degree of innovation and heresy. He tries to be objective, taking care to base his critiques of the falāsifa on his readings of their works.[1]

In Minhāj,[2] Ibn Taymiyya traces the emergence of falsafa among Muslims back to the time of Mu'tazilism and Jahmism. According to him, it is the Mu'tazilites and the Jahmites who paved the way for the encroachment of Greek philosophy upon the thought of the Muslim community. The mutakallimūn, especially the Mu'tazilites and the Jahmites offered as Islamic the doctrines that they elaborated in their theological discussions using Hellenic methods. Then came the falāsifa themselves. In his assessment, these Muslim Hellenists had the intention of correcting the mistakes of the mutakallimūn, many of whose doctrines they saw as rationally untenable. By introducing the purer, more original Hellenism, the falāsifa wished to put Muslim rationalism back on the track after its diversion by the mutakallimūn. The result, says Ibn Taimiyya, was obvious: the works of the falāsifa were not better, but much worse, than those of the mutakallimūn, in their disservice to the religion. The ex-

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[1]Kamali, Islamic Thought, p. 56. [2]Minhāj, 1:86-88.

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tremists among the falāsifa--like the Khurramiyya, the followers of Bābak al-Khurramī,[1] and the Carmathians (al-Qarāmiṭa), especially the disciples of the leader of a rebellious group in eastern Arabia, Abū Sa'īd al-Jannābī,[2]--totally "denigrated the religion of Islam with their hands and tongues."[3]

Despite this, there were falāsifa who were moderate and reasonable. They could find in the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad much that should not be overlooked. They studied the leading figures of law among the ancient Greeks, only to find that the divine moral teachings brought by the prophets like Moses and Jesus are far superior to those of the Hel-

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[1]The well-known leader of the revolt in Adharbaijān who was executed by Caliph al-Mu'taṣim in 838 C.E. The movement came into prominence after the execution of Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī by Caliph al-Manṣūr in 137 A.H./755 C.E. The movement was noted for its extreme reverence of Abū Muslim, believing that he was still alive and that he would return to the world to spread justice. It was also noted for its permissiveness (ibāḥiyya), besides its belief that every adherent of the religion is in the right path as long as he hopes for the divine reward and fears the punishment. Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, s.v. Khurramīyah; Dodge, Fihrist, 2:968.

[2]That is, Abū Sa'īd Ḥasan ibn Baḥrān al-Jannābī who, in 281 A.H./894 C.E., led the Carmaṭian rebellion at al-Aḥsā', in the eastern province of the present-day Saudi Arabia. The movement was characterized by, among other things, its heavy borrowing of concepts of foreign origin, particularly Neo-Platonism, pseudo-Hermetism, and Sabeanism, that had gained some firm ground in Islamic philosophical literature. Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, s.v. Ḳarmaṭians).

[3]Minhāj, 1:86.

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lenes. The prominent figures among the moderate, like Ibn Sīnā, even admitted that humankind has never been introduced to a moral law (nāmūs) superior to the Sharī'a of the Prophet Muḥammad.[1]

Aristotle, the first teacher (al-mu'allim al-awwal) of the falāsifa, lived some three centuries before Jesus. He was a minister to Alexander the Macedonian who conquered Persia. Ibn Taymiyya, rejecting the popular notion, maintains Alexander was not the Dhū al-Qarnayn mentioned in the Qur'ān since the Qur'ānic character lived some time before the Macedonian king and was one who surrendered himself to God (a muslim in the generic sense of the word), whereas Alexander, like the rest of the Greek people of his time, was a polytheist, worshipping stars and idols.[2] Later, Greeks saw the superiority of Christianity over their philosophy, and became strong followers of Jesus the Christ, the Messenger of God. Ibn Taymiyya insists on the superiority of the Greek Christians over the philosophers, even

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[1] Ibid.

[2] al-Radd, p. 186. See also Qur'ān 18:83-100. Many Muslims believe, as implied by Ibn Taymiyya, that the Qur'ānic character, Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, was in fact Alexander the Great. Thus the popular Islamic epithet al-Iskandar Dhū 'l-Qarnayn which he strongly dismisses. This assertion by Ibn Taymiyya seems to have been important for him, because he saw that some falāsifa claimed the validity of their science on the basis of the argument that they followed Aristotle, their "first teacher" (al-mu'allim al-awwal), the minister and teacher of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn mentioned in the Qur'ān.

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though they had corrupted the religion of Jesus and changed it into another faith. "The Christians," he says, "are still more rightly guided than the proponents of philosophy."[1] The Muslims at large, in their attitude towards philosophy, are like the Christian. Those among the falāsifa who were well-versed in the teachings of the Prophet found these teachings superior to the Greek legal techings. "The conscientious among them and those who were not fanatical did not follow the Greeks in everything."[2]

Nevertheless, these moderate, reasonable falāsifa still held some false ideas in rational matters inherited from their predecessors. Many of them cast doubt on Prophetic Traditions--transmitted in a reliable and uninterrupted way (mutawātir)--because they saw these traditions at variance with their own doctrines. Moreover, some of them followed the Bāṭinites in ta'wīl, the capricious interpretation of the inner meaning of religious tenets. They introduced the views that the prophets did not come with truths that could be proved in a demonstrative, scientific, (philosophical) way, and that the prophets did not explain the whole truth that they knew from God.

Another group of falāsifa said that the prophets did not know the truth at all, that they were superior in prac-

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[1] Minhāj, 1:86-87. [2] Ibid.

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tical matters but were inferior in scientific and philosophical fields. Because of their practical orientation, the prophets addressed people in an allegorical and imaginative way (takhyīl), giving their followers phantasies about belief in God and in the hereafter. Such beliefs would benefit the public in political and social affairs, although the articles of their faith were in fact false and irrelevant to the realities of being. The concept of takhyīl, Ibn Taymiyya says, is the doctrine of Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd, and the Bāṭinites.[1] Thus, according to Ibn Sīnā, the prophets addressed common people, using their phantasies, while the truth lies beyond those external teachings. Ibn Sīnā and other falāsifa allowed the prophets to tell a lie to people, although they said that prophets lied for the good of the public (al-kidhb li al-maṣlaḥa).[2]

Ibn Taymiyya also indicates that some falāsifa even refused to interpret the prophetic teachings on the grounds that those teachings were no more than allegories and should

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[1] Ibid., 1:88.

[2] Ma'ārij, p. 182. Here Ibn Taymiyya seems to have misunderstood the philosophical idea of prophethood. In fact the falāsifa said that the prophets' imagination was so strong that if they imagined to meet angels, see paradise, speak with God, etc., they really experienced that imagination. Hence their perception of spiritual truth as symbolic truth. Thus the prophets not only made people believe in those symbols, but they themselves also believed in them. See page 115 above. Cf. Rahman, Prophecy, pp. 36-37.

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be left as such. Interpretation of their inner meanings would suggest that they were essentially true, although they should be understood beyond their literal expression. Interpretation, then, would undo their imaginative character and spoil their real nature.[1]

Some falāsifa agreed that rituals (ʿibādāt) are useful, the real intention of the rituals being moral education. But they saw rituals as necessary only for the common people (al-ʿawāmm), while the elect (al-khawāṣṣ), because of their knowledge of essential truth, are exempt from such educational devices. All this leads to a conclusion that the bidʿa of the Muʿtazilites with their scholastic theology was the direct prelude to the heresy (ilḥād) of the falāsifa.[2]

The falāsifa were the most to blame for the rampant schism in the Muslim community. It is true that the Muʿtazilites were among the first responsible for creating rifts in the religion. It is also true that the Shīʿites were more schismatic than the Muʿtazilites, because the Shīʿites were diverted farther from the Sunna than the Muʿtazilites--it is said that there were seventy-two factions of them. As for the falāsifa, there was nothing that could unite them. "They were more devisive than any other group among Muslims, as well as among Jews and Christians." Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā,

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[1] Minhāj, 1:88. [2] Ibid.

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the two most prominent Muslim philosophers who based their doctrines on the philosophy of the peripatetics (al-mashshā-'ūn), or followers of Aristotle, could not agree on anything. In their contentiousness they resembled Aristotle himself, who disputed with his predecessors in ways that would take much time to describe.

Ibn Taymiyya saw that astronomy, as a mathematical science, is one of the most valid in the falāsifa's system of thought. Nevertheless he mentions that the work of Ptolemy, Almagest--which he says is also the most valuable in the rational sciences--is full of rationally untenable doctrines. Thus the falāsifa were deeply divided among themselves. "Even if you tried to see their division just in astronomy, you would find that they were split in still a greater number of factions than any group among the People of the Qibla."[1] Their divisions in other natural sciences and logic, not to mention metaphysics--all of which are much less reliable than astronomy--were much worse.[2]

Despite his harsh criticism, Ibn Taymiyya still credits the falāsifa with superior authority to the mutakallimūn in sciences like mathematics and physics, just as the latter

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[1]Muwāfaqa, 1:88-89. The term "People of Qibla" (ahl al-qibla) is an epithet for Muslims implying, in the Murji-'ite sense, that anyone who prays facing the qibla (Ka'ba in Mecca), is a true Muslim, no matter how sinful he may be.

[2]Ibid.; Dar' Ta'āruḍ, 1:156-158.

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were superior to the former in matters theological.[1] But, as far as metaphysical questions are concerned, Ibn Taymiyya, like al-Ghazālī before him, holds that such purely rational and speculative search for the ultimate truth is of no avail. Despite the falāsifa's adoration of metaphysics as the "first philosophy", the fact is that it contains only theories in the form of mental judgments that do not correspond to external reality at all.[2] In full accordance with his own epistemology, Ibn Taymiyya argues forcefully that man's primordial knowledge about God, the Ultimate Reality, through his fiṭra, should be validated by an active search for guidance from holy books, and by correct knowledge about the prophetic methods for bringing mankind to God and to the appreciation of His uniqueness (tawḥīd).[3]

Refutation of the Falāsifa's World-View.

Ibn Taymiyya's principal objection to the falāsifa's world-view centers around their concept of God, which reduces Him to an impersonal and rational category devoid of any capability of becoming the source of morals and an ethical way of life. His criticism of metaphysics revolves around the falāsifa's concept of Necessary Being and the U-

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[1] Ma'ārij, p. 186. [2] Naqḍ, p. 167.

[3] Ibid., pp. 32 and 35.

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niqueness of Being, which for him corresponds to the Bāṭinite method of ta'wīl. This concept, he insists, has no basis either in the Holy Book or in the Prophetic Traditions. Since the falāsifa inherited it from the Sabeans of Ḥarrān, it is irreconcilable with the true Islamic faith.[1]

In criticizing the metaphysical concept of Necessary Being, Ibn Taymiyya first traces its origin back to Aristotle. It is Aristotle and his followers from among the peripatetics (al-mashshā'ūn), says Ibn Taymiyya, who were the first to introduce the concept of the first cause (al-'illat al-ūlā) which they sometimes called the final cause (al-'illat al-ghā'iyya).[2]

The falāsifa's concept of God as the Necessary Being (al-wājib al-wujūd) who is the sufficient, eternal cause of the universe has led them to the concept of the coevality (al-muqārana) of the effect with the cause--hence the doc-

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[1]al-Julaynid, al-Imām, pp. 186-187.

[2]Basically there are four kinds of 'illa in the Aristotelian metaphysics. The first is the material (al-hayūlāniyya or al-māddiyya), then the formal (al-ṣūriyya), the efficient (al-fā'iliyya), and the final (al-ghā'iyya) which is called the primary (al-ūlā), or the purposive (al-limā'iyya or al-limmiyya). These causes are either sufficient (al-tāmma) or insufficient (al-nāqiṣa). The material cause of a thing is its substance, which could be physical, mental, or spiritual. The formal cause is its shape which, for Aristotle, is its essence. The efficient cause is the work of an Active Agent to produce it, and the final cause is its final purpose. M. Saeed Sheikh, A Dictionary of Muslim Philosophy, s.v. al-'Ilal al-Arba'a.

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trine of the eternity of the world. This should explain why Ibn Taymiyya was especially harsh towards metaphysics. His criticism of it, although it was not the most extensive and systematical, constituted the most fundamental part of his rejections of Hellenism. We may now turn to what he represents as the falāsifa's views and then turn to his criticism of their Weltanschauung based on Aristotelianism and Neo-Platonism.

The falāsifa held the view that the Maker of the universe is ʿilla tāmma (a sufficient cause), which is also sempiternal (azaliyya). Such a cause always, and by its nature, necessitates from all eternity the existence of the object of its causation (al-maʿlūl), which is the whole universe.[1] This universe, being a caused object (maʿlūl) of the sufficient, eternal cause, cannot by any means be separated from that cause. But the falāsifa agreed that the universe, being a caused object, is logically posterior to its cause. Yet, there was a controversy concerning the temporal aspect of causation. Some of them held that the universe has temporal contiguity (ittiṣāl zamānī) with its cause, others said that it has only temporal coevality (iqtirān zamānī) with its cause.[2]

Although the first, sufficient, and eternal cause is

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[1] Minhāj, 1:88. [2] Ibid., 1:92-93.

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God, some falāsifa did not think that He is the sufficient, eternal cause for all existence. God is only the cause for the heavenly spheres and the prime matter (al-hayūlā) which, they say, are the foundations of the universe. As for the temporally emerging and originated phenomena (al-muwalladāt or al-ḥawādith), God is not their cause, but the movement of the sphere.[1]

Some falāsifa put the idea differently. They said that God is the Effector (al-mu'aththir) with the accomplished effect (athar) from all eternity who supertemporally necessitates his objects of effection. In the same pattern of reasoning, some falāsifa said that God is the Preponderant Cause (al-murajjiḥ) with eternally consummated preponderance (rujḥān). Sometimes God is also perceived as the Potent (al-qādir) and Free Willer (al-mukhtār), but whose will requires his willed objects (al-murādāt) from all eternity. These arguments result not only in their well-known doctrine of the eternity of the world, but also in the denial of God as the Creator ex nihilo, who created all existences knowingly and volitionally.[2]

Ibn Taymiyya comes forward with a forceful and extensive argument against this doctrine. He begins by contending that if the world is to be conceived as coming into exist-

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[1]Ibid., 1:89. [2]Ibid., 1:88.

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ence from a sufficient, eternal cause, not from a voluntarily creating agent, and if such cause always and naturally necessitates its objects of causation from all eternity, nothing of the caused objects could really fall behind the cause in being eternal, not even in the logical, let alone in the temporal, category. It is then impossible for God to cause anything to exist and therefore the universe could not have come into being. In case the universe is posterior to its cause, such universe cannot be eternal, because something else, i.e., its cause, has preceded it in existence.[1]

The same argument is applied against the falāsifa's perception of God as the Preponderant Cause with an accomplished preponderance from all eternity, or as the Effector with eternally consummated effection, or the Willer who supertemporally necessitates the existence of His willed objects. The last notion, Ibn Taymiyya points out, would result in a self-contradictory idea: God is a Willer, yet He does not create the world voluntarily but, rather, compulsorily, since the universe exists out of necessity.[2]

If the temporally generated things (ḥawādith) of the universe come into existence because of the spherical movement as their sufficient cause, the ḥawādith, then, must exist together with the spherical movement. As the falāsifa

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[1]Ibid., 1:92. [2]Ibid.

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claimed, the spherical movement has God as its sufficient, eternal cause, and this necessitates its coevality with Him. If this argument were valid, the ḥawādith, then, must also have eternal existence and coevality with God through their coevality with the spherical movement, their sufficient cause. But the falāsifa maintained that ḥawādith come later than their cause, the spherical movement, because of the tardiness of its objects to prepare for the effection. This, the falāsifa said, is like the case with the effect of the Active Intellect's emanation: it is sufficient cause in itself, yet its effect is delayed because of the delay in the preparedness of its object.[1]

Such an argument is true only so far as it concerns something the readiness of whose effection comes from other than itself, as is the case with the falāsifa's Active Intellect. The effect of the Active Intellect's emanation, the falāsifa tell us, is contingent upon objects other than itself--for example, human minds. Ibn Taymiyya compares this effect to the sun's rays, which are also a total cause--that is to say, sufficient--but their effect is partly dependent on their object of effection, for example, the condition of fruits. If the fruits are damp because they are still green, the sun's rays would make them wet and soft. But if they are

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[1]Ibid., 1:89.

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completely ripened, the sun's rays then would dessicate them into stiffness.[1]

But the case of the universe's temporal phenomena (ḥawādith) is totally different. The recipient of their effection is the universe itself which, according to the falāsifa, is eternal. How could an eternal thing become an object of the effection from another thing? And even if it became so, being eternal, it would be impossible for it to be delayed from its source of effection.

Just as it is inconceivable that the universe comes later than the ḥawādith and it is also impossible that the ḥawādith are delayed from the spherical movement, their sufficient cause, the entire existence must have emerged all at once. This argument of the falāsifa must lead to the conclusion that the ḥawādith, like the spherical movement that acts as their sufficient cause, and like the whole universe, are all in fact eternal--an extremely self-contradictory idea.[2] This line of argument once more illustrates the impossibility of conceiving creation in terms of sufficient, eternal, and necessary causation. God, the truly Necessary Being and Creator of all that exists other than Himself, does not depend for His creative act upon any other thing, be it the preparedness of the objects of His creation or the

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid.

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receptivity of those objects for the effect of His creation, or anything else. He creates all existence by His will and His knowledge, and ex nihilo.[1]

Ibn Taymiyya points out further that the falāsifa often related the idea of a sufficient, eternal cause to the idea of God as the Unique, Simple Being (al-wāḥid al-basīṭ), from whom, they said, nothing could emerge except a unique, simple thing. The logical consequence of such a view is that a unique, simple being cannot be a sufficient cause except for still another unique, simple entity. Since this is in conflict with reality, as the universe is full of multifarious, ever-changing phenomena, some falāsifa have been forced to reject the idea of the unique, simple being. The concept is not only religiously groundless, but philosophically questionable.[2]

As for the contention of the falāsifa that the sufficient cause for the ḥawādith or muwalladāt is the spherical movement, not God, Ibn Taymiyya rejects it by maintaining that movement is a series of phenomena occurring one after another in a time sequence. It is impossible for such an entity to be a sufficient cause for another entity. Being a continuously changing phenomenon itself, movement cannot be the necessitator of another existence as a sufficient cause

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., 1:88.

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in the meaning in which the falāsifa held it to be. Besides, a movement itself cannot be originated from a sufficient, eternal cause, since such origination requires it to be coeval with its cause in all eternity. How could it be that an entity, which is a series of events with the units that come one after the other in temporal sequence is eternal? Like any other existing thing, the ḥawādith are the creation of God by His will and knowledge.[1]

The ḥawādith are in fact concomitants (malzumāt) of the existence of the universe. It is unthinkable for an agent to be a sufficient cause for the concomitant objects without first having been the cause for their source (al-lāzim). Thus, if the maker of the indispensable ḥawādith is the spherical movement, it would then be necessary for it to be the sufficient cause for the whole universe itself, which the falāsifa would certainly refuse to admit. In addition, the concept would also lead to the conclusion that both God and spherical movement are actually creators complementary to each other or, at least, that God's creatorness is incomplete until the fulfilment of the spherical movement's function as sufficient cause for the ḥawādith. This is also the case with the spherical movement itself. That is, the spherical movement cannot be a sufficient cause for the ḥawādith

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[1]Ibid., 1:89.

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unless God is functioning as the sufficient cause for the universe. This is religiously untenable, besides the fact that logically such an idea would inevitably end up with the insoluble problem of a vicious circle (al-dawr) or endless chain (al-tasalsul), i.e., which among the two creators should act first to enable the other to act?[1]

Thus, the argument that the spherical movement is the sufficient cause for the temporally generated phenomena leads inevitably to considering the existence of a creator other than God. Ibn Taymiyya argues, following the orthodox line, that it is impossible for the world to come into existence from more than one creator, as that would end up with competition between parallel creators, which must result in the destruction of existence. But if those creators are cooperating with each other in creating the whole existence, or if one of them creates the foundations of the universe (such as the falāsifa's first cause which necessitates the existence of the universe), and the other creates the concomitant phenomena (such as their spherical movement as the sufficient cause for the temporally generated phenomena--the ḥawādith or muwalladāt--in the universe), such gods then are not omnipotent.[2]

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[1]Ibid., 1:92.

[2]Ibid., 1:89. See Qur'ān 21:22, "If there had been in both of them (the heaven and the earth) other gods besides

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It has been suggested that movement, being a series of events in a time sequence, cannot come into existence from a sufficient, eternal cause. Therefore some falāsifa argued that God is the sufficient, eternal cause only for the being of spheres, but not for their movements. This argument, like the preceding ones, is bound to lead again to the existence of a creator other than God, something the falāsifa would also deny. Some of them, therefore, maintained that God is not the sufficient, eternal cause for the spherical movement in its entirety and all at once. He is only the cause for each unit of that movement in a time sequence. For Ibn Taymiyya this argument is even less tenable, the reason being that if the conception of God as sufficient, eternal cause were true, His causing for a movement in a time sequence would mean that He, in fact, is never a sufficient, eternal cause, but the cause for the movement only at any given time when every single unit of it comes into being. Thus God's being a cause or a creator, as well as His volition, are, in fact, ever-renewed for Him ad infinitum. This is in direct contradiction to the falāsifa's own contention that God, being a Unique, Simple Being, is the same forever, never ef-

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the God, then surely both would have gone to ruin. Glorified then be the God, the Lord of the Throne, above what they attribute," and 17:42-43, "Say, 'Had there been other gods with Him, as they say, then those gods would have surely sought out a way to the Owner of the Throne. Holy is He, and exalted far above what they say.'"

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fected by His being the source of causation. To change in quality or condition, they said, would interfere with His absoluteness.[1]

It is because of the perception of God as a Unique, Simple Being, according to Ibn Taymiyya, that the falāsifa said that it is contrary to reason for God to begin doing a certain thing, like creating ex nihilo, after not having been doing. For the falāsifa, creating would mean an addition to God's essence or an emergence of some new factor to His being in the form of new qualities--like power, will, knowledge, the availability of a means of creation, or the absence of an obstacle to that creation. Such emergence, the falāsifa argued, would interfere with His being absolute. At the same time, the falāsifa claimed that God is the cause for the spherical movement not in its entire being, but for every single unit of it. This is rationally absurd, since sound reason affirms that for someone who causes something to exist after not having done so, like God's being the cause for spherical movement at its every single moment in a time sequence, it is unimaginable to be perceived as having the same quality and condition before, at the time of, and after the act of causation.[2]

The falāsifa argued that God, in order to cause the

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[1]Ibid., 1:91. [2]Ibid.

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world into existence, does not change in quality. His causation is only the necessary consequence of His very being, combined with the preparedness of the recipient objects (al-qawābil), i.e., objects that are to receive the effect of His causation. This theory of causation is the reason why Ibn Sīnā and other Jahmite thinkers who denied the attributes (ṣifāt) and deeds (afʿāl) of God were of the opinion that the changing quality of God's being a cause after having not been so is something separated from His essence or, in other words, is itself a caused object. The meaning of causing, within the confines of the conception of God as sufficient, eternal cause, is to be understood as identical with the very coming into being of the caused objects themselves.[1]

Ibn Taymiyya challenges this idea on the basis of the impossibility of an object other than God Himself having an effect on Him that would decide His being a cause or His not being so. For him such a view would ironically end up with the abrogation of the absoluteness of God, something that the falāsifa claimed to avoid. If God is an Absolute Being, there should be nothing that could influence Him except Himself. He then should be independent and free to choose whatever He wills. For Ibn Taymiyya, this is the meaning of

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[1]Ibid., 1:92.

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the oft-quoted Qur'ānic verse, "Verily, His command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, 'Be!', and it is."[1] He claims that the view of God as a voluntary actor was held not only by the early generations of Muslims (Salaf), but also by most of the leading figures of virtually all religions, even by many falāsifa themselves, from among the ancient as well as the later generations.[2]

Ibn Taymiyya mentions the more specific view of Ibn Sīnā concerning the ḥawādith. Ibn Sīnā argued that the first caused existent prepared the conditions for the ḥawādith to emerge, but he did not speak of the problem of what would have prepared the conditions for the emergence of the first caused existent itself, within the concept of sufficient, eternal causation, except pure non-existence (al-'adam al-maḥḍ). Such a view is arbitrary, especially because the falāsifa also held that pure non-existence does not necessitate the production of new qualities in God like will or power to bring things into being. In other words, the falāsifa saw the world as coming into existence not because of the power and will of God (something which for them is irrelevant to the concept of sufficient, eternal causation) but simply because of the mere existence of God.

What the falāsifa really wanted to say, Ibn Taymiyya

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[1]See Qur'ān 36:82.

[2]Minhāj, 1:92.

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asserts, is that God as the sufficient, eternal cause of the world is inseparable from His creation or, in other words, that there is an identification of the cause with its caused objects, or between the creator and the creature.[1] Also the essence of their doctrine is that God's activity does not have any purpose, nor does it have any praiseworthy consequence in itself. This is to say that the universe is value-free. As to the reason for their view, Ibn Taymiyya mentions their denial of God's volition (irāda), because for them God's causation is out of necessity. For Ibn Taymiyya, a person who denies God's volition is much more likely to deny the existence of the purpose of creation. Therefore the followers of religions, not only of Islam but also of Judaism and Christianity, are more on the right track than those peripatetics.[2]

Nevertheless, Ibn Taymiyya says that some falāsifa were aware of the faults in such theories. Instead of holding purely to the concept of sufficient, eternal causation of the Aristotelian system, some of them, including Ibn Sīnā himself, developed the theory of existence (wujūd), necessity (wujūb), and contingency (imkān). This doctrine, according to Ibn Taymiyya, was stolen from the Mu'tazilite kalām. While the mutakallimūn had argued from the existence of

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[1]Ibid., 1:93. [2]Ibid., 1:94-95.

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created things for the existence of the creator (bi 'l-muḥdath 'alā 'l-muḥdith), the falāsifa argued from the existence of the contingent for the existence of the necessary (bi 'l-mumkin ʿalā 'l-wājib).[1]

When, in upholding the doctrine of God as Unique, Simple Being, the falāsifa were confronted with the fact of the variedness of world phenomena, they tried to solve the problem by adopting the concept of universal intellects. They said that the first emanant (al-ṣādir al-awwal) is the first intellect (al-ʿaql al-awwal) which, because of the First Principle (al-mabda' al-awwal), is necessarily existent, but itself contingent. They said further that the first intellect has three aspects: its being necessary (because of the First Principle) originates another intellect; its being existent gives the existence of souls; and its being contingent in itself results in the emergence of the spheres. Sometimes the falāsifa contended that from the first intellect's aspect of existence stems the form of the spheres, and from its aspect of contingency stems the matter of the spheres. They disagreed among themselves as to whether the spherical spirit is an independent substance or an accident. Thus the metaphysical phlosophers (al-falāsifa al-ilāhiyyūn) of the later generations used the term "Necessary Being,"

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[1]Ibid., 1:96.

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for what the ancients referred to as the "First Principle," which is also identified as the "First Cause."[1]

The falāsifa maintained that the Active Intellect has perpetual emanation, from which spiritual as well as material objects emerge. It is also from the Active Intellect, claimed the falāsifa, that knowledge, consciousness, and other intellectual qualities emanate. The Active Intellect is the sustainer (al-rabb) of all existence under the lunar sphere. The Active Intellect is not God, because it is not independent. Its emanation is contingent upon the existence of the disposition and receptivity that result from the movements of the spheres. The movement above the moon itself is not from the Active Intellect, but from still another agent. This Active Intellect is, therefore, the real Lord of

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[1]Ibid., 1:96 and 111; Cf. Muwāfaqa, 4:248. The discussion of the intellects refers to the concept of effusion or emanation (al-fayḍ) advocated by some Muslim peripatetics like al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. There are, according to them, ten universal intellects. The highest in rank is the first intellect, which is the direct emanation of the First Principle. From the first intellect springs the whole series of emanations, bringing the nine spheres into existence. These nine spheres have their own intellects. Thus, the second intellect is the intellect of the primum mobile, the highest sphere. The third intellect belongs to the sphere of the fixed stars. The fourth intellect is that of the sphere of Saturn, the fifth of the sphere of Jupiter, the sixth of the sphere of Mars, the seventh of the sphere of the sun, the eighth of the sphere of Venus, the ninth of the sphere of Mercury, and the tenth of the sphere of the moon. This intellect of the lunar sphere is also the Active Intellect, and is considered to have direct influence upon the existence and the life under the moon, that is, the earth. Sheikh, Dictionary, s.v. al-ʿUqūl al-ʿAshara.

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humankind, from whom revelations and inspirations emanate. Sometimes the falāsifa identified the Active Intellect with the archangel Gabriel, and they saw the angel as the imaginative form acquired by the minds of the prophets. This, quite expectedly, is rejected by Ibn Taymiyya as entirely false, just as the whole concept of the ten universal intellects is for him a crass supertition.[1]

Closely related to the falāsifa's concept of God as the Unique, Simple Being, and their notion of the First Cause and the effusion is their claim that behind all existing things are quiddities (al-māhiyyāt) which are totally different from the externalities of those things. These quiddities exist eternally and without any reason. They are the recipient objects (al-qawābil) for the First Cause's causation. The falāsifa made similes for their theory with the origination of heat from fire and coolness from water. Heat is not the fire itself, they said, but a different entity, although inseparable from the fire. The same is true of coolness and water. But for the fire to cause heat and the water to produce coolness, recipient objects are needed--the materials to be heated or cooled.[2]

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[1]Ibid., 1:94; Bughyat al-Murtād, published in the Majmū'āt al-Fatāwā al-Kubrā, first edition (Cairo: Maṭba'a Kurdistān al-'Ilmiyya, 1329/1911), pp. 151- 153.

[2]Ibid., 1:111-112.

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Ibn Taymiyya rejects this theory as groundless. He says it was founded on the false principle that there is always an objective reality for every mentally conceived notion. God's effect of causation--if He should be conceived as sufficient, eternal cause--cannot be in need of any other objects, be they quiddities of the falāsifa's presumption or other things, as the recipients (al-qawābil) of His causation, whereas fire and water, as they themselves noted, need other objects to make their causation of heat and coolness effective.[1] Ibn Taymiyya argues that the would-be affirmed notions which are mentally conceived before their own external existence is really known do not imply that their external existence could always be confirmed. Thus, purely rationally conceived notions, such as the existence of quiddities, exist only in the mind of the concerned person. He holds that the difference between what is there mentally and what is there objectively is well-established. He says that the falāsifa committed many such mistakes because, when they conceived things in their minds, they also thought that such things existed in the external world. This error pertains to nearly all their basic contentions, like the theory of the universal intellects, the universal quiddities (al-māhiyyāt al-kulliyya), prime matter (al-hayūlā), and so on.[2]

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid.

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Another aspect of the falāsifa's cosmology refuted by Ibn Taymiyya is their concept of God as al-maʿshūq (the beloved) and the entity of all spheres as al-ʿāshiq (the lover). The spheres' desire to imitate God, their beloved, caused their perpetual movement. In this way, according to the falāsifa, God acts as the cause of all causes (ʿillat al-ʿilal), since the spheres are on their own also causes. This is how the falāsifa tried to affirm the existence of the final cause (al-ʿillat al-ghāʾiyya) of the universe, i.e., the desire on the part of the world to imitate God and to be as close to Him as possible. But the falāsifa still failed to admit God as the creative, volitional actor. The farthest that the falāsifa have gone in their cosmology is to see that God is the cause of the sphere's perception, as they claimed that the spheres with their movements are spiritual phenomena.[1]

Ibn Taymiyya, to repeat, has a very low opinion of Aristotle's metaphysics. He says that the first teacher's theory of existence is not worth studying, since it offers very little substance and contains many errors. Ibn Sīnā and

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[1]Ibid., 1:95. Ibn Sīnā held that the spheres are rational living beings who will never cease to exist. Since angels are said to be living, rational beings who will never perish, the spheres for him are also called angels. Ibn Sīnā, Risāla fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt wa Taʾwīl Rumūzihim wa Amthālihim, ed. Michael E. Marmura (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār, 1968), p. 54.

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other falāsifa had extended Aristotle's doctrines, then began to speak about God, prophecy, and the secret meaning (ta'wīl) of the Qur'ānic verses. They discussed the various stages of gnosis (ma'rifa), and even the destination of souls. In this way they mixed the prophetic methods with the methods of the ancient Greeks, causing a fusion of truth and falsity.[1] Nevertheless, among them there were those who were more enlightened, who saw many mistakes in the Avicennian system. Ibn Rushd, for instance, held that what Ibn Sīnā elaborated concerning the nature of revelation, dreams, and the source of knowledge about the future was his invention and had nothing to do with the ancient peripatetics.[2]

Consistent with his stern orthodoxy, Ibn Taymiyya made a tour de force critique of the falāsifa's cosmology in order to confirm his religious conviction that God is the omniscient being who creates all existence, through His volitional acts. This divine volition, inherent in God's essence, is in the teachings of all the prophets, and has been unanimously accepted by the first generations of the Muslim community. God cannot be conceived as a sufficient cause in the philosophical sense of the term, eternal or otherwise, for such a conception would make God impersonal, and have serious religious implications.[3]

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[1]Ibid., 1:96. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., 1:92.

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It has been mentioned that, according to Ibn Taymiyya, the orthodox view of God was also the doctrine of the ancient philosophers, by whom he seems to have meant pre-Aristotelian thinkers. Even more important is his finding that some Muslim falāsifa themselves held the same orthodox doctrines. One of these he much admired is Abū 'l-Barakāt, a prominent eleventh century Jewish philosopher and physician of Baghdad who embraced Islam late in his life, and who had attained both fame and the highest Court office while he was still a Jew. Abū 'l-Barakāt grew up among the 'ulamā' of Ḥadīth and eventually wrote a work to refute Aristotelianism.[1] Abū 'l-Barakāt rejected the concept of God as the Unique, Simple Being (al-wāḥid al-basīṭ) and proposed a theory that the causes of changes in the universe are the perpetually renewed (mutajaddida) volitions and even perceptions of God, qualities and attributes which he said were inherent in His essence.[2] The doctrine led Ibn Taymiyya to consider Abū 'l-Barakāt far superior to most falāsifa, and the closest of them all to truth and guidance.[3]

Abū 'l-Barakāt confirmed the attributes (ṣifāt) and

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[1]Ibid., 1: 98. Cf. Serajul Haque, "Ibn Taimiyya", A History of Muslim Philosophy, M. M. Sharif, ed., 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), 2:804; Fazlur Rahman, "Islam's Attitude Toward Judaism", The Muslim World, 72 (January, 1982):7.

[2]Minhāj, 1:111. [3]Ibid., 1:93.

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deeds (af'āl) of God, in complete harmony with the orthodox doctrine. As a thinker who was free from taqlīd, Abū 'l-Barakāt defended the religious doctrine of God's omniscience and volition. Abū 'l-Barakāt was considered by Ibn Taymiyya one of the few Muslim thinkers with a philosophical inclination who affirmed God's knowledge of particulars and, on solid ground, refuted the the Muslim peripatetics' argument that God, being a sufficient eternal cause who is unique and simple, knows only universals.[1]

As regards the perpetually renewed volition of God, Abū 'l-Barakāt saw that it is in accordance with His ever-chang-

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[1]Ibid., 1:96. The view that God knows only universals, not particulars, had been one of the major targets of criticism of the falāsifa made by al-Ghazālī. But in his refutation of the criticism, Ibn Rushd said that al-Ghazālī had misunderstood the term "knowledge" (al-'ilm) used by the falāsifa. According to Ibn Rushd, the term 'ilm is used both in the sense of "created knowledge" (al-'ilm al-muḥdath), as well as in the sense of "eternal knowledge" (al-'ilm al-qadīm). This is like the case with the word "al-ṣarīm" which is used in both senses of light and darkness. Human knowledge is created knowledge, and is caused by the object of that knowledge (ma'lūl li 'l-ma'lūm bihī), while God's knowledge is the contrary: it is the cause (al-'illa) of its objects, which are the whole creation. "Thus to suppose the two kinds of knowledge similar to each other is to identify the essences and properties of opposite things, and that is the extreme of ignorance." Moreover, "how can anyone imagine that the Peripatetics say that God, the Glorious, does not know particulars with His eternal knowledge, when they hold that true dream-visions include premonitions of particular events to people in their sleep from the eternal knowledge that governs and rules the universe?" Ibn Rushd, Faṣl, pp. 38-39; translation by George F. Hourani, "The Decisive Treatise", in Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi, eds., Medieval Political Philosophy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, paperback edition, 1978), pp. 172-173.

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ing creation. He maintained that created things come into being one after another from God's causation, inherent in Him. Thus Abū 'l-Barakāt denied the eternity of the world. Moreover, he vindicated many prominent ancient philosophers who also acknowledged God's attributes and deeds. Abū 'l-Barakāt argued that a particular creative act of God happens at the completion of its sufficient reason at the time of that act, and that the completion of such reason is there because of the choice and will of God. In other words, the completion of that reason is not from what the falāsifa called the "recipient objects" (al-qawābil), consisting of prime matter (al-hayūlā), or quiddities (al-māhiyyāt) presumed by the philosophers. God, for Abū 'l-Barakāt, is impossible to be conceived as the Manager (al-mudabbir) of the universe except in the sense of His voluntary acts of creation and of His knowing all created objects, universal as well as particular.[1]

Refutation of Aristotelian Logic.

Ibn Taymiyya's refutation of the falāsifa's world-view constitutes the most fundamental part of his critique of Islamic Hellenism. It is the unshakable belief of Ibn Taymiyya that the falāsifa, because of their doctrine of the eternity

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[1] Minhāj, 1:96-97.

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of the world (discussed above) have contributed most to the erroneous trends among certain groups in Islam--for example, free thinking (zandaqa) and the monistic (ittiḥādiyya) trends among the Ṣūfīs. To Ibn Taymiyya, the doctrine of monism (also known as waḥdat al-wujūd), as reflected in the teaching of Ibn ʿArabī, represents the most serious threat to the religion of Islam.[1]

Ibn Taymiyya's refutation of logic (al-manṭiq) is the most extensive and systematic of his critiques of falsafa. To that end, he wrote two works, al-Radd ʿalā al-Manṭiqiyyīn [2] and Naqḍ al-Manṭiq,[3] the first more voluminous than the second, but their contents almost identical. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (1445-1505) mentions a third work of Ibn Taymiyya on the subject, Naṣīḥat Ahl al-Imān fī al-Radd ʿalā Manṭiq al-Yūnān, but this may be only another name for one of the other two books (probably the first), since al-Suyūṭī also mentions a smaller book (perhaps the second), which he said he never saw. Al-Sūyūṭī made an abridgment of the work he had, and titled it Kitāb Juhd al-Qarīḥa fī Tajrīd al-Na-

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[1] See Thomas Mitchel, "Ibn Taimiyya's Critique of Falsafa", Hamdard Islamicus (Karachi) 6 (Spring 1983):3-14.

[2] al-Radd ʿalā al-Manṭiqiyyīn, ed. Syed Sulaiman Nadvi (Bombay: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Qayyima, 1368/1949).

[3] Naqḍ al-Manṭiq, ed. Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq Ḥamza, Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣanīʿ and Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Faqī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya, 1370/1951.

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ṣīḥa. His intention was to make Ibn Taymiyya's work easier to understand, since it is "unfortunately trackless and barely accessible (to understanding)."[1]

Ibn Taymiyya's emphasis on formal logic was fully justified. Von Grunebaum says that among the functions of Hellenism in Islam was, above all, to provide the Muslims with rational forms of thought and systematization, to lend them logical procedures, methods of generalization and abstraction, and principles of classification.[2] At the core of those contributing systems was syllogistic logic (ʿilm al-manṭiq), which is the theory of correct reasoning which the falāsifa believe to be the basis of the entire philosophical edifice.[3]

Islamic logic, like the rest of medieval Islamic science and falsafa, is basically Greek, and, as Ibn Taymiyya properly argued, has very little to do with the original Islamic doctrines. The Muslims restructured Aristotelian logic, organizing it by its subject matter as al-Isāghūjī,

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[1]Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, Kitāb Juhd al-Qarīḥa fī Tajrīd al-Naṣīḥa, [abridgment of al-Radd, published in one volume with Ṣaun al-Manṭiq], ed. with an Introduction by ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār (Cairo: al-Nashshār, 1947), pp. 201 and 343.

[2]Gustave E. von Grunebaum, Islam and Hellenism, ed. Dunning S. Wilson, Islam and Medieval Hellenism: Social and Cultural Perspectives (London: Variorum Reprints, 1976), p. 25.

[3]R J Hollingdale, Western Philosophy (New York: Tablinger Publishing Company, 1979), p. 20.

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(Isagogue, Introduction), al-Maqūlāt (Categories), al-ʿIbāra (Hermenuetics), al-Qiyās (Analytics), al-Burhān (Apodeictics), al-Jadal (Topics), al-Mughālaṭa or al-Safsaṭa (Sophistics), al-Khaṭāba (Rhetoric), and al-Shiʿr (Poetics). Nicholas Rescher says that the Muslims made some important original contributions to the Aristotelian system through the works of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and Ibn Rushd. The West later took their ideas and elaborated them into what is known as the prominent "innovations" of medieval Latin logic.[1]

Ibn Taymiyya begins his critique of logic with a summary of the basic tenets of the falāsifa in the theory of science. He says that they divided all scientific knowledge into either concepts (taṣawwur) or judgments (taṣdīq). These forms of knowledge can be either self-evident (badīhī) or discursive (naẓarī). Inference (qiyās) and definition (ḥadd) are said to be the two methods for arriving at true knowledge. Definition is used to make right description, and inference is the tool for sound judgment. Definition as a mode of analysis of reality is made by identifying the qualities of the defined object which are essential to it (ḥaqīqiyyāt or dhātiyyāt) and others which are accidental (ʿaraḍiyyāt). An essential quality can be either common to a

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[1]The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. "Arabic Logic" by Nicholas Rescher.

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class of entities, (genus, jins), or special to certain members of it. (differentia, faṣl). Species (naw') is the combination of genus and differentia. Accidental qualities common to all members of an entity are called general accidents (a'rāḍ 'āmma), and those special to certain members are called properties (khaṣā'iṣ or khāṣṣiyyāt) or specifications (mumayyizāt). All of these are universals (kulliyyāt), as opposed to particulars (juz'iyyāt) whose inexaustible variety is considered as instances.[1]

Furthermore, the falāsifa maintain that reality consists of matter (mādda) and form (ṣūra). It is the function of definition to designate the form of a thing. It is because of the fact that forms are not independent of one another and are internally complex that, the falāsifa say, a definition is also always composite in character. It must contain the genus, of which the given form is a constituent, and the differentia, i.e., the peculiar constitutive character by which a form becomes unique in its class. Since form is known, but not proved--as a constituent of genus--matter is its externalized existence in the world of nature. Matter, then, is a form materialized, and is the basis of every trait of the real world not possible to be provided

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[1] al-Radd, pp. 4-7. Cf. John Leofric Stocks, Aristotelianism (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1963), pp. 36-37.

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form, claimed to be the object of philosophical definition.[1]

There is a complexity of reality that follows from a form but is not part of it and therefore it is not the task of definition to explain it. Inference (qiyās), is the method of uncovering that complexity, as it results in the judgment of reality. As to the methods of qiyās, the falāsifa say that a qiyās could be either of a generality (ʿumūm) or comprehension or subsumption (shumūl), of resemblance (shabah) or analogy (tamthīl), of induction (istiqrā') or succession (tatabbuʿ).[2]

The inference of generality or comprehension is the inference that proceeds from universals to particulars, and is the procedure for deductive logic, the main concern of the falāsifa. The inference of resemblance or analogy is the one that moves from particulars to particulars, and the inference of induction or succession is made from particulars to universals.[3]

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[1]Stocks, Aristotelianism, p. 41. [2]Naqḍ, p. 183.

[3]Ibid., pp. 200-211. There is a little confusion as to the exact translation and meaning of the Arabic term "qiyās". Kamali translates it as "deduction", and Serajul Haque renders it as "syllogism". Here I prefer to give its technical meaning as "inference", which could be deductive (istidlālī), or inductive (istiqrā'ī), or analogical (tamthīlī). "Syllogism" should be reserved as the English equivalent of the Arabic term "al-qiyās al-manṭiqī," which is the most important form of deductive logic, although the term "qiyās" could be just the short form for those various kinds of inference. See Kamali, Islamic Thought, p. 58; Haque, "Ibn Taimiyyah", 2:805.

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In the light of its subject-matter, a qiyās could be demonstrative (burhānī), rhetorical (khaṭābī), dialectical (jadalī), poetical (shi'rī), or sophistical (sufisṭā'ī or mughālaṭī). The poetical inference is one that serves imagination and emotional movements. The sophistical is that which appears to be true but is really false. As the falāsifa said, this is misrepresented wisdom and therefore there is no need to discuss it here. But the first three are worth discussing.

The dialectical qiyās or inference has a premiss which is acceptable to the interlocutor. The rhetorical has a premiss which is widely known or generally accepted (mashhūr). The demonstrative is the deduction with a premiss said by the falāsifa to be definitely true.[1]

Syllogism is the deductive logic which consists of three parts, each a declarative sentence (jumla khabariyya). Each of the first two is called the premiss (al-muqaddima), and the third is the conclusion (al-natīja). The subjects and the predicates of the three sentences are called terms (ḥudūd). Thus there are six terms in a syllogism, as each of its parts has a subject and a predicate. But there are only three different kinds of terms, the middle term (al-ḥadd al-awsaṭ), the major term (al-ḥadd al-akbar), and the minor

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[1]Naqḍ, p. 158.

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term (al-ḥadd al-aṣghar). The middle term appears in both premisses, the major term is the predicate of the conclusion, and the minor term is its subject. The premiss with the major term is called the major premiss (al-muqaddimat al-kubrā), and the one with the minor term is the minor premiss (al-muqaddimat al-ṣughrā). The conclusion is the logically true consequence of the two premisses.[1]

As a deduction, syllogism is an entity with a structural as well as a semantic relationship between premisses and conclusion. Aristotle's aim was to formalize deductive analysis, but his use of the word "syllogism" itself is often ambiguous. The broader sense of its meaning is given by defining it as logos, in which "certain things being posited, something other than what is posited follows of necessity from being so." In this sense, syllogism corresponds to deduction as an informal argument which leads logically to a conclusion, but does not have to have a certain number of premisses or a particular structure. In the narrower sense, syllogism is "the formal inferences and chains of formal inferences that Aristotle isolated." Syllogism is, then, the structured representation of general deductive reasoning.[2]

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[1] al-Radd, p. 349. Cf. Hollingdale, Philosophy, pp. 20-27.

[2] Jonathan Liar, Aristotle and Logical Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 10-11.

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Aristotle divided syllogism into perfect and imperfect. The perfect is the one in which "nothing else (apart from what is given) is needed for the necessary to appear", and the imperfect is what "needs one or more things for that purpose, things which are indeed necessary by reason of the given terms but which are not explicitly stated through the premisses."[1]

Deductive logic is the theory of conclusive inference, and it moves from a general proposition to a particular one. Demonstrative inference (al-qiyās al-burhānī), like deductive logic, is considered the highest form of syllogism. The falāsifa claimed that this form of deductive logic is applicable to all sciences and therefore is evidence of the unity of knowledge and being.[2] It is also known simply as demonstration (burhān),[3] and is, in the falāfisa's terminology, the deduction of comprehension or subsumption (qiyās al-shumūl). Qiyās al-shumūl was claimed by the falāsifa to be the method of demonstration, which is explained as of "the progression of mind from a given thing to a universal concept which in its generality includes or comprehends that thing and many others." Judgment is made on that thing using that

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[1]Günther Patzig, Aristotle's Theory of the Syllogism (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 44-45.

[2]Stocks, Aristotelianism, p. 38.

[3]Hollingdale, Philosophy, pp. 20-21.

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common universality, by way of movement of the mind from that persistent universal aspect to the immediate consequence--that is, the specific.[1]

The falāsifa said that demonstrative inference should be based on indisputable knowledge (ʿulūm yaqīniyya) as premisses. These materials of demonstration can be in the form of sense perceptions (al-ḥissiyyāt), which are internal (bāṭina) and external (ẓāhira); the rational premisses (al-ʿaqliyyāt); the self-evidents (al-badīhiyyāt); the recurrents (al-mutawātirāt); and the experimentals (al-mujarrabāt). Some of them add intuitive truths (al-ḥadasiyyāt). All of these are considered universal premisses.[2]

Ibn Taymiyya does not question the validity of the deductive process leading to apodeictic proof. He only maintains that the concept of demonstration is mostly groundless.[3] He does not want to dispute that the two premisses of a syllogism, if they are conceived and structured in a proper way, would certainly benefit knowledge through a conclusion. He takes as an example a Ḥadīth in which the Prophet said: "All intoxicant is wine (khamr), and all wine is unlawful (ḥarām)," implying that any intoxicating beverage is included in the designation of the word "wine" that God has

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[1] al-Radd, p. 119; Kamali, Islamic Thought, pp. 58 and 80.

[2] Naqḍ, p. 202.

[3] Fakhry, Philosophy, p. 317.

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made unlawful to drink, ordained in the Holy Book of Islam.

Another Ḥadīth related by al-Bukhārī and Muslim says that the Prophet was asked about beverages made from sorghum, called mizr, and from honey, called bitʿ. "Having been given the all-exhaustive formulations (jawāmiʿ al-kalim) the Prophet answered, 'Every intoxicant is unlawful.'" Ibn Taymiyya agrees with the falāsifa that these Prophetic traditions are included in the designation of syllogistic proof. But he refuses to accept their claims that the Prophet also used formal (Aristotelian) logic. He insists that such a method of making proof is instinctive (fiṭrī), that man knows it without formal learning. It is like counting, he says. "But then the falāsifa put the theory of syllogism in lengthy discussions, and make it strange to minds."[1]

Ibn Taymiyya questions the validity of logic, by exposing the problems pertaining to the concept of universal. The falāsifa asserted that syllogism will not give us true knowledge except by means of positive and universal propositions. Syllogism, they said, should have at least one affirmative and comprehensive universality, and it cannot be formed of two negative propositions, nor of two particulars, a claim with which Ibn Taymiyya agrees. Nevertheless, among all the demonstrative propositions there is none which is

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[1]Naqḍ, pp. 204 and 200-201; al-Radd, p. 349.

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really free from problems, except the primary self-evidents (al-badīhiyyāt al-ūlā) which he concedes may contain some sort of general truth. The self-evidents are supposed to give us descriptions of external realities, which means that for the falāsifa there are indeed realities corresponding to such universalized perceptions.[1] But there is no such thing as universal in the world of reality, because the external and internal senses (al-ḥiss al-ẓāhir wa 'l-bāṭin) of man perceive only the particular objects that he has direct access to, which are tangible to him.

Consistent with his concept of fiṭra, Ibn Taymiyya maintains that knowledge is intuitive and particular. Knowledge is information which involves participation by living beings through their sense perceptions. Thus, demonstrative science is obtained mainly by the activity of the senses. It is through the senses that man arrives, after intellectualization, at the universal assessment.[2] This is especially true of the experientials (al-mujarrabāt). It is only the mind, then, that makes judgments on the similar aspects of the objects experienced, by associating them with other objects. This, he says, is simple analogical reasoning

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[1] Naqḍ., p. 204.

[2] al-Radd, p. 300. Cf. J.D.G. Evans, Aristotle's Concept of Dialectic (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 16.

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(qiyās al-tamthīl), not syllogical demonstration (burhān).

Instinctive truths (al-ḥadasiyyāt) are the same as the experientials, only the latter are more direct. Observation is said to be one of the methods leading to knowledge supported by intuitive truth, but observation is less direct than experience--for example, the observation of the changes of the lunar face against the sun in its relation to the earth, used for calculating the dates of the month. Observation is a kind of experiment without directly experiencing the object. The result of observation, like the result of any experiment, is specific and particular and cannot be generalized into a universal except by means of analogical reasoning.[1]

The falāsifa explained self-evident truths (al-badīhiyyāt) as those primary propositions ingrained by God in the human mind primordially and without any intermediary--the knowledge of mathematical truths, for instance. Ibn Taymiyya recognizes their validity, but he rejects their signifying any real knowledge, insisting that real knowledge is that which is specific and particular and based on external existence. Consider as an example, the proposition that "several things which are equal to one thing are also equal to each other." This does not tell us anything about the real

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[1] Naqḍ, p. 204.

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world, since judgment there depends on the senses. Mental perception is no more than reasoning of realities you have already known through your internal as well as external sense perceptions, and of the general and the special qualities of those realities.

Thus reasoning, by which universals are conceived, is unimaginable without sense perceptions, either external or internal. This is true of all cases of the falāsifa's universals--for example, the simple mathematical notion that one is half of two, and the geometrical notions of the straight, the bending, the triangle, the rectangle, and the philosophical notions of the necessary, the possible, the impossible, etc. Whether or not those presumptions conform to the real world is known only by sense perception. If sense perception and reasoning combine, as, for example, the vision of the eyes with the activity of the mind, it is possible then to conceive the existing specific realities and to deduce their general character by identifying their points of resemblance and difference. But again, this is simple analogy, not demonstration.

If sense perceptions work alone, they conceive only particulars, never universals. On the other hand, if abstract reasoning works alone, it conceives only the universals presumed in the mind, which may or may not have external reality. With mathematical truths, for example, the factual existence of the countables themselves cannot be known

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except through sense perception. An abstract numbers or geometrical truths are reasoned to exist by the mind. Thus, the primary, self-evident premisses of the falāsifa's claim are no more than intellectual presumptions not necessarily signifying external realities.[1]

If the primary self-evident universals (al-kulliyyāt al-badīhiyyāt al-ūlā) do not signify anything except mentally conceived universals and other abstract notions, and if all other materials (mawādd) of the demonstrative syllogism (internal and external sense perceptions, overwhelming reports, experientials, and intuitive truths) yield only particulars, it is then invalid to claim that deductive logic composed of those premisses is "the scale of all universal and demonstrative sciences." If those materials signify truth at all, such truth can be discerned by means other than demonstrative syllogism--intuitive, rational, conventional, religious, and apodeictic means.[2]

It is clear, according to Ibn Taymiyya, that if a demonstration should be based on a universal premiss, the premiss should only be in the form of a rational, self-evident proposition. But, being purely rational, such a proposition never tells us about reality, so that its use for demonstration is futile. It is established that demonstration is im-

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[1]Ibid., pp. 202-203. [2]Ibid., pp. 204-205.

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possible, and that the structured deductive inference of syllogism is untenable and does not prove anything of the real world.[1]

Ibn Taymiyya's line of argument could be explained in another way. Aristotle's concept of demonstration incorporates an opposition between the notion of substance and its attributes. If the substance is indemonstrable, but its attributes are, the opposition is thus ignored, since the demonstration of the attributes describes the reality. Such demonstration implies that there are in reality some parts--i.e., attributes--which cannot be of the same nature with it, and yet are demonstrably true of it.[2]

This Ibn Taymiyya cannot accept, as it obviously entails self-contradictory ideas and is inconceivable except subjectively, if the interlocutor happens to agree with the basic assumption of the opposition between substance and attribute, or between form and matter. A demonstration based on those ideas, if it is understood at all, could at best be only an esoteric science understood by an exclusive group of people without reference or relevance to reality. If it happens that a person could show the correspondence of a syllogistic demonstration to a reality, that person must have

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[1]Ibid., p. 205.

[2]Evans, Dialectic, pp. 10 and 74.

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known that reality before with his sense perceptions. In fact, that is the case with all people. That is why logicians are also called "people of speech" (ahl al-kalām), because they do not provide any knowledge which has not been known before.[1]

Ibn Taymiyya rejects the falāsifa's assertion that analogical reasoning (al-qiyās al-tamthīlī) is less convincing than demonstration through the inference of subsumption (qiyās al-shumūl). He maintains that analogy is not only the more universal method of reasoning among mankind, but that it provides us with the more dependable method of discerning religious faith (al-ʿaqīda) "in a way which is no doubt more convincing than deductive logic."[2]

Since Ibn Taymiyya rejects the universality of a proposition or premiss in a syllogism, and because for him the three terms of syllogism are all particular species, such a view is quite consistent. Thus syllogism is actually the same as analogy and, therefore, syllogism is always a redun-

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[1] Naqḍ, p. 206.

[2] Ibid.; al-Radd, p. 233. For more discussion on Ibn Taymiyy's term "qiyās," see Kamali, Islamic Thought, p. 58, where it is suggested that for Ibn Taymiyya, as for most people, the term qiyās is applicable in both cases of qiyās al-tamthīl and qiyās al-shumūl. As far as Ibn Taymiyya is concerned, this could be seen as the logical consequence of his rejection of the validity of a universal contained in the major premiss of a qiyās al-shumūl, which, in turn, results in his rejection of the possibility of demonstration based on syllogism.

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dance, as suggested above. If the points of resemblance between two objects are already known, deduction is no longer needed. Besides, the species is better known by analogy or observation than by syllogism.

Human knowledge that comes from analogical reasoning, as the falāsifa claimed for their demonstration, also proceeds out of rational necessity. As an example of analogy, "since Abū Bakr (the first caliph) is superior (afḍal) to ʿUmar, and since ʾUmar is superior to ʿUthmān and ʿUthmān is superior to ʿAlī, we know out of necessity that Abū Bakr is superior to ʿAlī." Another example that Ibn Taymiyya gives for his analogical reasoning is that "since Medina is superior to Jerusalem, but it is not obligatory for all Muslims to make pilgrimage to Medina, we know that it is not obligatory for them to visit Jerusalem." Also, since the tomb of the Prophet is superior to any other tomb, and yet it is not a religious prescription to touch and kiss it, "we, out of rational necessity, know that it is not prescribed for Muslims to touch and kiss any other tomb, including the tombs of the saints."[1] Ibn Taymiyya concludes that analogical method is more emphatic in signifying judgment of specific objects than syllogical demonstration.

Furthermore, the falāsifa said that the rationally

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[1]Ibid.

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known universal self-evidents that are the propositions of syllogism should not be in any need of still another syllogism to discern. Otherwise, it would result in a vicious circle or an infinite regression. With this Ibn Taymiyya agrees, but he extends the case to all of human knowledge because, for him, the division of judgments into those which are self-evident and those which are not is far from clear, taking into consideration how radically people differ in their powers of apprehension. He maintains that there is no clear-cut disjunction between self-evident things known primordially and others which are not. "On the contrary," he says, "such disjunction varies in accordance with the variation of the strength and purity of minds, and with the extent of their knowledge of the particulars from which universals are deduced." Thus, looking at a syllogism, some people can grasp the middle term, upon which the validity of syllogism depends, much more directly than others, due to their sharpness of mind and intuitive power, as was admitted by Ibn Sīnā himself. In fact, there is not a single piece of universal knowledge that you cannot understand without syllogism.[1]

Suppose that that particular structure of logical deduction and its components indeed signify universal knowl-

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[1]Ibid., pp. 207-208; al-Radd, p. 351.

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edge. But whence is the falāsifa's argument that universal knowledge other than what they see as self-evidents cannot be discerned except by using definition and syllogical reasoning? "The absence of knowledge does not mean the knowledge of absence."

The person who holds such a claim cannot perceive his own condition: "If only he examined his own condition, he would certainly find in himself universal knowledge (other than the self-evidents), without resorting to formal logic, and other perceptions that he obtains without relying on definition." If it happens that they cannot understand universals without syllogical proof, it is still not justified for them to hold that all people are in the same position as they, keeping in mind the great diversity of human intellectual capacities.[1]

The fact is that God even gives special knowledge to anyone He chooses, as is the case with the prophets. But then the falāsifa claimed that prophets themselves applied syllogistic reasoning, indeed even God Himself knows about the affairs of His creatures through syllogism! Now it is the responsiblity of the falāsifa to prove that their claim is justified. It is admitted, Ibn Taymiyya argues further, that the principles of the falāsifa concerning internal and

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[1] Naqḍ., p. 208.

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external perceptions, self-evidents, experientials, and intuitive truths could benefit us with valid certainty. But how do they know that valid certainty cannot be obtained by some other method?[1]

Ibn Taymiyya then concludes his criticism of formal logic by making the accusation that the art is suspect of rejecting religious truths, and its supporters of being obstinate, atheistic and hypocritical. He mentions a person "from Persian stock" who came to a scholar to learn logic. When the scholar read for him a piece of the art, he said: "Master, where is the chapter that would permit us to abandon prayer?" And the audience laughed! That is why, Ibn Taymiyya says, whoever is sympathetic towards logic and its authorities, if he does not have religious and intellectual provisions that would keep him on the right track, will spoil his mind and faith.

On the other hand, one who has sound reason and faith would, out of necessity, oppose the logicians in their rejection of religion. According to Ibn Taymiyya, many outstanding Muslim scholars find that logic is like mathematics and some other sciences: it could not prove or disprove the truth of Islamic religion.[2]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 208-209; al-Radd, p. 158.

[2] Naqd, p. 209; al-Radd, p. 133.

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The Problem of Philosophical Definition.

As regards definition (al-ḥadd), which is claimed by the falāsifa to be one of the two methods of discerning realities (the other being syllogism), Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of it in Naqḍ al-Manṭiq and al-Radd ʿalā al-Manṭiqiyyīn is extensive and systematic. His lines of argument represent one of the best examples of an orthodox Muslim thinker's understanding of, and attitudes toward Islamic Hellenism as represented by falsafa. Ibn Taymiyya's discussion and critique of definition are as follows:

First, definition is no more than a statement made by the definer about the nature of the defined object. Knowledge of the definition happens after the knowledge of the defined object. If the person who makes a definition knows the defined object without the definition, the falāsifa's assertion that something cannot be discerned except by using definition is abrogated. If the definer knows it after having known the previously made definitions, it would then result in a vicious circle (dawr) and an endless regression (tasalsul).[1]

Second, definition is untenable because the falāsifa themselves had never agreed upon a single definition of anything. Every definiton they made was claimed as true by some

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[1] Naqḍ, p. 184; al-Radd, p. 38.

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and disputed by others. If the realities cannot be discerned except through definition, then none of those philosophers really discovered any reality, since any definition they made was disputable. Since what is mentioned in any definition needs to be known beforehand by some way other than definition, human beings cannot have any knowledge, as one definition needs another definition in an endless series.[1]

Third, people who argue using definitions are small in number, like people who argue using formal logic. It is established, among laymen and specialists, that human knowledge is obtained without definition, and false to say that knowledge depends upon definition. This is especially true of prophets who do not need defintion for their knowledge. And it is true of the followers of the prophets among the learned and the common people. The first three generations of the Muslim community, who were the most knowledgeable about true religious science and wisdom, did not force themselves to acquire definitions. They had not created this art, and the Persian and the Greek books had not been translated yet. According to Ibn Taymiyya, after the translations, which were done by the heretics among the mutakallimūn and the falāsifa, dissension and ignorance, "the extent of which only God knows," became rampant among Muslims.[2]

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[1] Naqḍ, p. 184; al-Radd, p. 8. [2] Naqḍ, p. 185.

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The same is true also with medical and mathematical sciences, as well as with many other branches of human knowledge. Among the really prominent figures in these disciplines, there were none who forced themselves to learn the art of structured definitions, using the concept of genus (al-jins) or differentia (al-faṣl), except those who had blended their sciences with the arts of the logicians.

Leading grammarians like Sībawayh, whose works are unequalled, never resorted to artificial definition, either. Though Sībawayh's works embody the highest wisdom of Arabic, he did not define noun (ism), agent (fā'il), etc. When some other grammarians began to apply definition to their science, they produced for a single object many different definitions, so that practically all of their definitions are disputed among themselves.

Some jurisprudents (fuqahā') have similar experiences. Their definitions of cleanliness (ṭahāra) and uncleanliness (najāsa), for example, are not unanimously acceptable even to them. This is the case too with the theorists of the principles of jurisprudence (uṣūl al-fiqh) when they tried to define the meaning of "tradition" (sunna), "analogy" (qiyās), "certitude" (yaqīn), etc. None of their definitions is totally acceptable without problems. Among the definitions made by the mutakallimūn for their subjects, not a single example of their efforts is really satisfactory. Each faction has its own definition.

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The people who tried to make definitions for their fields of learning were those who were the least expert and knowledgeable in their disciplines. A really accomplished scholar in a certain field, like Sībawayh in grammar, never ventured to make definitions. We can conclude that if the intelligent people in every branch of science become expert in their fields without using artificial definitions, it is false to claim that knowledge is dependent upon such definition.[1]

In addition, we know a great number of wise men who never wrote books. These men have profound insights (al-baṣā'ir), illuminations (al-mukāshafāt), discernment of truth (al-taḥqīq) and gnosis (al-ma'ārif) that the experts in the theory of artificial definitions do not have. Then "whence is the argument that comprehending essences or realities depends upon definitions?"[2]

Fourth, God gives man external as well as internal sense perceptions whereby he perceives realities. Man perceives by hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and touching, and grasps realities in even greater proportion through his intuitive thinking. As for verbal definitions, it is unimaginable that by mere words the reality of a particular thing can be comprehended. If it happened that such verbal expres-

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 186.

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sions could describe a reality, the external and internal aspects of it, it still would not mean that we have to use definiton. Someone who knows some reality by having perceived it and tasted it--as, for example, the reality of honey--will not be in any need of a definition to conceive it. Those who have never tasted honey cannot grasp the reality of such a substance through mere wordy explanation or definition. They may be given some description of honey through comparison with another substance--as, for example, sugar--but such comparison and approximation is a kind of analogical reasoning, not a definition.

The same is the case with realities pertaining to internal perceptions like anger, excitement, sadness, distress, and awareness. Whoever feels such realities indeed perceives them. Whoever never feels them will never perceive them by using definitions. A blind man will never perceive colors, an impotent man will never understand coitus, no matter how well definitions are made for them.[1] If such a definition can be said to yield knowledge of an object, it does so only after the object has been perceived.

Fifth, definition is nothing more than a general statement made by a definer--for example the philosophers' definition of man as "rational animal" (ḥayawān nāṭiq) and the

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[1]Ibid.

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grammarians' definition of sentence as "a combination of words signifying a complete sense." The perception of the purposes of those verbal statements does not prevent ambiguity from arising about them. They may not be ambiguous to some because of their expertise in the relevant field of discussion. In such case, those definitions do not explain reality by themselves, but by another factor, i.e., the concerned person's expertise. A definition gives only a general sense which exists only in the mind, not in the external world, and what is there in the mind is not the reality of things. It is not enough for realities to be grasped only mentally. This is another proof that definition does not provide us with any real knowledge.[1]

Sixth, as a form of statement a definition is within the category of words. A word is not capable of explaining for a listener its true meaning unless he already has some perception of that word derived by some method other than the wording itself. To put it differently, for a listener to understand a word it is necessary for him to know beforehand the object which the word designates. Conceiving the objects in their isolation, then, is needed before understanding a word or a combination of words in a sentence. If understanding the words should be obtained through other words, it

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[1]Ibid., pp. 186-187.

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would inevitably end up with a vicious circle, and this is absurd. Thus, a statement about the genus and differentia of a thing, such as the falāsifa claimed to be the task of a definition, does not give us new understanding about a reality, except, as suggested earlier, in a general sense. Ibn Taymiyya refuses to admit that a generalized comprehension signifies the discernment of a reality.[1]

Seventh, the task of a definition is primarily to differentiate and set apart a defined object from all others. A noun is also supposed to differentiate the object of its designation from other objects. A defintion signifies differentiation and classification in a way which is not much better than a simple noun, sometimes even more difficult. We would better understand what the designation of the word "man" is simply by that very word "man" than by a definition such as "a rational animal." Nevertheless, the signification of the word "man," like the definition "a rational animal" is only general, not particular. Therefore mere words do not signify knowledge of reality. On the contrary, reality is grasped by internal and external senses.[2]

Eighth, the falāsifa claim that internal and external sense perceptions perceive reality only in an undesignated way. They say that the understanding of the generality or

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[1]Ibid., p. 186. [2]Ibid., p. 187.

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specificity of a reality is the function of rational judgment. The mind reasons about the quality of a particular thing and compares it to another particular thing, and may perceive a quality common to both of them. This is the generalizing function of the mind. For example, if a person reasons about the animality found in a certain living being, and also about the rationality that exists in another certain living being but does not exist in the first, he perceives that there is a quality shared by all living beings, that is, animality, and another which is peculiar to certain living beings--that is, rationality. The first quality is the jins (genus) and the second is the faṣl (differentia). Species (naw') is the combination of the genus and the differentia.

Ibn Taymiyya admits that all of these concepts can be true. But for him the problem is that a man cannot draw any benefit from a mere verbal statement that a certain quality is shared by a class or species and that the other is peculiar to a certain member of it if he has not known the actuality of the relevant objects beforehand. This is so, because, in the world of realities, there is no sharing of a genus by a species. Such definitions give the meanings of differentiation and generalization in the same way as nouns, only if the denoted objects of those nouns are properly understood. As has been indicated, we understand the word "man" in the same ways, if not better, than the phrase "a

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rational animal." It is then proved that there is no use for a definition beyond what is already implied in nouns or simple sentences.[1]

The ninth problem is the falāsifa's division of the qualities of a species into the essentials (al-dhātiyyāt) and the accidentals (al-ʿaraḍiyyāt), and then the essentials into the genus (al-jins) and the differentia (al-faṣl), and the accidentals into the common accident (al-ʿāmm) and the property (al-khāṣṣiyya or al-khaṣīṣa).[2] The falāsifa claimed that it is only the essentials, either the genus or the differentia, which constitute a reality. Some accidentals could be persistent or concomitant (mulāzima) to a species, yet not constitute the essential parts of its reality. To cite examples, animality is the genus of human being, rationality his differentia, walking and other volitional movements his common accidents, laughing and erect posture his properties. It is the main task of a definition to identify those qualities for a defined object.[3]

Ibn Taymiyya does not question the basic validity of such a statement, but he says that it cannot be anything more than intellectualization of the reality. For him it is wrong to see a fixed, intellectually conceived notion as the exact description of the real world, because intellectual

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[1]Ibid., pp. 188-189. [2]Ibid., p. 189. [3]Ibid.

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perception is only relative and conditional. To understand a quality, he says, the mind should associate it with other qualities it has perceived before. A conception in the mind is true only if it directly and exactly corresponds to the factual being of an object. The reality remains as it is, "regardless of whether or not it is perceived by the mind.[1]

Thus, Ibn Taymiyya questions the worth of such philosophical concepts, maintaining that it is erroneous to say that only essentials constitute the reality of an object, while accidentals, although persistent, do not constitute the essential part of a reality. "All qualities are persistent to their subject, and are the same in all respects." He argues that there is no essential distinction between a differentia and a property, nor between a genus and a common accident.[2] Thus he rejects the falāsifa's assertion that to know what man is, someone should discern what rationality is, and then his other qualities as, for example, laughter. Such an order of sequence is groundless, since it does not exist externally. For him the truth is that the two human qualities mentioned, rationality and laughter, may not come into somebody's mind, or one of them may come and not the other. Even if both qualities come to mind, it does not necessarily mean that one knows the reality of what man is

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid.; al-Radd, pp. 76-77.

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unless he uses his internal and external sense perceptions. The falāsifa themselves conceded that to identify the essential qualities of an object is difficult and its conception arduous. The definitions most people make are only of the external form, not the essence. This difficulty is there because the falāsifa arbitrarily made distinction between indistinguishable qualities, shuch as their concepts of essentials (ḥaqīqiyyāt) and accidentals (ʿaraḍiyyāt).[1]

The tenth point of Ibn Taymiyya's critique pertains to the falāsifa's claim that people cannot grasp the meaning of certain things unless they have proper training or experience. This implies that only special minds could understand such a concept as essences. He rejects the point by ridiculing the falāsifa, saying that they made it for their own subjective and selfish interests. "Their proposition is that whatever they designated as essentials should be accepted as essentials, and whatever they left behind should be considered accidentals." Thus the falāsifa made arbitrary judgments, according to their whims. This is to Ibn Taymiyya the main reason that the falāsifa were the first to bring damage to the religion of Muslims, as they introduced bidʿa they had taken from the Sabeans of Ḥarrān, that "eventually diverted the community from the right course."[2]

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[1] Naqḍ, p. 189; al-Radd, p. 70. [2] Ibid., pp. 190-191.

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The eleventh subject is further criticism of the falāsifa's argument that reality is composed of genus and differentia, that reality is always composite (murakkab). Ibn Taymiyya contradicts the notion by asserting again that there is no such thing as compositeness (tarkīb) of genus and differentia in the real world. If, for example, rationality and animality are to be envisioned as substances (jawhar), man is definitely not composed of two substances, the rational and the animal. On the contrary, rationality and animality are just two features of one substance, man. But then the falāsifa argued that compositeness is a quality at one time and a substance at another. Ibn Taymiyya says that such an argument is like the argument of the Christians concerning the doctrine of Trinity, which is "the most contradictory contention, by unanimity of all learnéd men."[1]

It is the falāsifa's right to claim that compositeness is a rationally and mentally conceived reality. But then the compositeness is not the aim of definition, since a definition is made to describe the world of external realities. He also asserts that some features are common to a species and others peculiar to some members of it only. But, he says, the dispute is over the problem of distinguishing the essential qualities from the concomitant and accidental ones.

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[1]Ibid., pp. 191-192.

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He also admits that some qualities are more notable than others. Thus rationality of man is more impressive and nobler than laughter. Even God exalted rationality when He said, "For by the sustainer of heaven and earth, this (life after death) is the very truth, as true as the fact that you are rational."[1] The controversy for Ibn Taymiyya is over the problem of the artificial distinction between qualities, that some of them constitute the essence of an object and some do not.[2]

Twelfth, even if there is such a discernible essential quality of an object, the reality of that object cannot be conceived only by means of the discernment of its essential qualities. To completely grasp the essence of a thing, one must use sense perceptions.[3]

The thirteenth question is pertinent again to the problem of genus and differentia. If a definition consists of two parts, each part has to be clearly understood by means other than the definition itself. The fact is that the two parts, as the falāsifa themselves assumed, are understood without recourse to a further definition. This demonstrates that definition is not indispensable for perceiving an essence. Furthermore, the direct sense perception of those qualities is firmer and proportionately greater than per-

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[1]Qur'ān 51:23. [2]Naqḍ, pp. 191-192. [3]Ibid.

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ceiving them mentally by way of mere intellectualization.[1]

The fourteenth issue is the question of how many components--i.e., words and their denotations--should be used in a definition to make it easily comprehensible. The purpose of those components is to clarify whether the qualities mentioned in the definition are the real parts of it or are only ascribed to it. The fewer the components of a definition are, the better, because the smaller the number of subjects, the easier for the mind to make a universalized perception of them.

But this is inimical to the fact that a definition is always more complicated than a simple noun ("rational animal" has more components than "man"). The assumption of the falāsifa is that the meaning of the words "animal" and "rational" combined is easier to grasp than the meaning of "man," but this is not the case. If it were so, such grasping would only be in a general sense and therefore would not give us the needed specification of the defined object. Therefore a definition is an explanation of an object using a method which is more difficult for the mind to grasp than the object itself.[2]

Fifteenth, God has taught humankind, through Adam, all names (asmā', singular, ism) and He has given them under-

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[1]Ibid., p. 193. [2]Ibid.

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standing of the named objects (al-musammayāt) by their very names.[1] Ibn Taymiyya emphasizes the importance of the proper understanding of names because, he says, human welfare is contingent upon such understanding. This is especially true for religious tenets, such as the unlawfulness of drinking the object named "wine" (khamr) and of giving and taking the object named "usury" (ribā). The Qur'ān condemns the Meccans who called their idols gods, an example of naming things improperly.[2]

Furthermore, naming things is conventional matter (sam'ī), while understanding the realities of those things is intuitive (fiṭrī). Man is born without knowledge, then God gives him the faculties of audition, vision, reasoning, etc., and these should be enough for him as the modes by which he perceives realities behind the conventionally spoken names. Thus, definitions are not needed.[3]

The sixteenth point again concerns the problem of genus and differentia. The definition of man as rational animal indicates the sharedness of animality by man and, say,

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[1]Qur'ān 2:31, "God taught Adam all names."

[2]Qur'ān 53:23, "These [allegedly divine beings] are nothing but names which you have invented--you and your forefathers--for which God has bestowed no warant from on high. They [the polytheists] follow nothing but surmise and their own wishful thinking--although right guidance has now indeed come unto them from their Lord."

[3]Naqḍ, p. 194.

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horse. Ibn Taymiyya disputes this idea by claiming that the animality of man is different from that of horse. The animality of man is peculiar to man, just as that of horse is peculiar to horse. This is also true of the sounds they make: man has speech, and horse has whinny. Thus, qualities may come under the designation of one name, yet their realities are different. The seeming sharedness of a quality is a resemblance (mushābaha), not a likeness (mumāthala). Therefore, it is wrong to emphasize the resembling qualities between entities, and neglect the differentiating aspects.[1]

In conclusion, Ibn Taymiyya holds that definition functions just like a simple name or noun (ism), only in an extended way. It signifies denotation of an object in the same way that any explanation or even translation does. It may or may not serve the purpose of clarifying a reality. Such a verbal expression will never be understood unless the meaning of the words contained in it is first perceived by some means other than the words themselves. This is the reason why most definitions make perception of realities even more difficult so that they "produce more confusions and squabbles among the falāsifa themselves."[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 196.

[2] Ibid., p. 200; al-Radd, pp. 39 and 62.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Ibn Taymiyya's system may be summarized as follows:

The goal of human life is happiness both in this world and in the hereafter. Happiness can be attained only if man perceives truth and lives by it. Truth (al-ḥaqq), which is also reality (al-ḥaqīqa), originates only from God, creator and source of all that exists. As the highest Truth, God is the ultimate goal of human effort. Awareness of His omnipresence through remembrance (dhikr) is the highest knowledge and gives man the loftiest experience of happiness.

As His mercy to man, God has equipped him with fiṭra, a natural, inborn inclination towards the good and the true. But fiṭra perceives truths and realities, including God, the highest truth and reality, only generally. Man perceives truth and reality by his sense perception (ḥiss), both external (ẓāhir) and the internal (bāṭin). By his external sense perceptions man grasps the immediate realities which provide him with data for his internal perceptions through the process of reasoning (naẓar) or reflection (tafakkur).

Since man cannot perceive divine truths in a further detailed way only by his own fiṭra, God has provided man with direct instructions from Himself through prophethood and prophetic messages, in the form of divine revelations.

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Religion is the "sent-down fiṭra" (al-fiṭra al-munazzala) because of its function as the corroboration of man's own natural inclination towards truths and reality, as dictated by his naturally constituted fiṭra. It is only natural, then, for man to accept religion and believe in the prophetic messages.

Just as immediate truths and realities are not the creations of man but of God, religious truths are, even more, the prerogative of God to define. Man cannot create religious truths or, for that matter, any truth, by his own reasoning or imagination, nor is the product of reasoning or imagination equivalent to the knowledge of truths and realities. To perceive external realities, man should apply his senses--sight, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting--and only secondarily his reasoning and reflection in processing the data collected by his senses. Similarly, man's natural perception of religious truths should take the form of wholehearted faith and belief, and sincere acceptance of revelation in its literal expression. Only secondarily is man justified in using his reason to perceive religious truths. Unlike the realities of the external world, upon which the application of human reason takes the form of reflection (tafakkur), religion opens itself to human reasoning only in the form of deep contemplation (tadabbur) of the intentions and implications of the revealed truths as they are contained in the scriptures. To consider the scrip-

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tural expressions as allegories that should be given symbolic interpretation (ta'wīl) would mean a gross intervention by man implying the superiority of his intellect over God's teachings.

Ibn Taymiyya's general principles, applied particularly to the religion of Islam, mean that religious truths can be discerned only by looking at the teachings of the Qur'ān and its historical implementations contained in the Prophetic Traditions and the Traditions of the Companions (al-ṣaḥāba) and the Successors (al-tābi'ūn). The Companions of the Prophet and their Successors are grouped together as the Revered Ancients (al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ), the Muslims of the first generations, who were the best community in their comprehension of Islam and their implementation of it. Their era was rightly mentioned by the Prophet as the best era. In the Holy Book they were guaranteed God's pleasure and His paradise. Therefore, we should accept the Salaf, together with their customary practices (Sunna) as examples and we should put aside all the historical debacles of fitna wars and leaving them to God's judgment.

Since all of their Traditions have now been codified, the Muslims have only to refer to the Holy Book, the Qur'ān, and the Sunan (Codifications of Traditions), with those by al-Bukhārī and Muslim considered the "The Two Authentic Ones" (al-Ṣaḥīḥayn), in order to understand their religion. These sources are paramount. Only secondarily man is allowed

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to use his reason about religion--to make analogies when needed to reach new truths not explicitly mentioned in the sacred texts.

To open oneself to religious truths as they are expressed in the sacred texts is natural for man, since it is the dictation of his own fiṭra. It is also rational, because reason (ʿaql) is human instinct (gharīza) which arises from fiṭra. Since religion is said in the Holy Book to be a kind of fiṭra, religious principles are always rational, and what is rational should by its nature comform to religion.

So far Ibn Taymiyya's doctrines should sound familiar to anyone who knows Islam, especially the Sunnite branch of it. There are other teachings which are peculiarly his own, products of his intellectual ingenuity. He was a Ḥanbalite, and remained faithful to the principles of Ḥanbalism all along. Ḥanbalism was more than just a madhhab in fiqh. Unlike the rest of the madhhabs, Ḥanbalism was nearly impervious to the common Hellenizing process of Muslim thought represented by scholastic theology, kalām, and Islamic Aristotelianism and Neo-Platonism, falsafa. Thus while the Mālikites and the Shāfiʿites were mostly Ashʿarites in theological orientation, and the Ḥanafites inclined towards Muʿtazilism, the Ḥanbalites continued to oppose religious rationalism and to produce anti-kalām-and-falsafa literary works.

Unlike the Ḥanbalites, most of whom did not deign to study adequately the objects of their criticism and refuta-

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tion, Ibn Taymiyya took pains to master kalām and falsafa before he criticized them so elaborately.

Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of kalām and falsafa was that they represented man's efforts to arrive at the truth by rational methods. The sciences of people who professed to be Muslims, kalām and falsafa used revelation, but only secondarily. They both presumed that reason explains revelation, and revelation is best understood rationally. Falsafa relied more on reason than kalām, and made more use of symbolic or metaphorical interpretation (ta'wīl). Kalām was Islamically more conservative than falsafa but, since it was heavily dependent on Hellenism, more or less on the same ground. Both misled the Muslims, and were held accountable for many schisms in the community (umma).

Hellenism as a foreign, non-Islamic element in the kalām and falsafa was the source of their errors. From Hellenism kalām borrowed such arguments for creation as: the proof from the theory of accidents, composition, and movement; and the concepts of necessity and contingency. Kalām then developed other concepts, like atomism and occasionalism, which deny the secondary causalities created by God. The concept of compositeness led many of the mutakallimūn to the idea of ta'ṭīl, depriving God of attributes and sometimes names. It also led Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī to the concept of God's states (aḥwāl). The theory of accidents was elaborated by al-Naẓẓām into the theory of vertical jump (ṭafra). Another

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bizarre doctrine of the kalām was the concept of acquisition (kasb) concerning human acts developed by al-Ash'arī. The atomism and occasionalism of the Ash'arites led them to the denial of the secondary causalities created by God.

As far as human acts are concerned, Mu'tazilism, because of its emphasis on human freedom and responsibility, was closer to the true teachings of Islam than Ash'arism. The Ash'arites, like the Murji'ites before them, were guilty of reducing faith (Īmān) to a matter of individual conscience, ignoring observable human conduct. Like the Mu'tazilites, the Ash'arites were responsible in their arguments for bringing many foreign elements of Hellenism into Islamic thought. All of these innovations for Ibn Taymiyya were dangerously subversive to the religious foundation of social and ethical life and personal morality, and therefore to be condemned.

Ibn Taymiyya was the last of the great Muslim thinkers to confront the challenge of falsafa and try to demolish it. Among the most pernicious of the falsafa doctrines to him was its conviction of the eternity of the world, and its perception of God not as a conscious, free creator, but as the necessary cause of all existence. The falāsifa's world-view held the coevality of the "creature" with its "creator," which could result in the blasphemous teaching of the unity of God and the world. To Ibn Taymiyya, pantheism and monism of some Ṣūfī schools, together with their fre-

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quent antinomian tendencies, are only the logical consequences of the falāsifa's world-view.

In his mission to refute falsafa, Ibn Taymiyya was markedly influenced by al-Ghazālī, in whom he found literary examples and materials against Hellenism. But he was disappointed too with al-Ghazālī because he saw in him obvious remnants of falsafa, especially formal logic or syllogism (al-qiyās al-manṭiqī). For Ibn Taymiyya this sympathy for the Aristotelian syllogism made al-Ghazālī unsuccessful in checking the spread of Hellenism. Ibn Taymiyya rightly viewed the syllogism as the principle upon which the whole edifice of falsafa was established, and he concentrated on it in his condemnation of falsafa. He was particularly critical of the concept of universals, since for him universals are nothing more than the human mind's intellectualization of the external realities which may or may not conform to those realities. For him realities are always specific and particular. Since a demonstrative proof for the falāsifa is based on a universal premiss, and since for him there is no such concept as universal, he rejects the validity of demonstration.

The philosophical claim of definition (ḥadd) is also artificial for Ibn Taymiyya. He rejects the falāsifa's theories of genus (jins) and differentia (faṣl), of common accident (ʿaraḍ ʿāmm) and property (khāṣṣiyya), and of accidental quality (ṣifa ʿāriḍa) and concomitant one (ṣifa lāzima).

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Because of this artificiality, it is false to claim that definition is the only way to give a description of reality. Definition is at best similar to explanation or even translation. Quite often, simple nouns or names describe reality better than definition does, and in an obviously less complicated way.

Despite his categorical rejection of Aristotelian syllogism, Ibn Taymiyya was a strong advocate of reasoning. For him reason is a divine gift complementing human fiṭra. Logical reasoning is only a natural, spontaneous process of the mind in its efforts to form a conception. Therefore, to set a certain pattern of premisses like the Aristotelian syllogism is artificial. Natural reasoning does not have to have a certain number of premisses all the time. More often than not, man perceives truth directly without being aware of the process.

Perception of truth is obviously dependent upon individual capacity. An individual with an acute mind would easily grasp the "pivot of judgment" (manāṭ al-ḥukm) or the "correlative value" (amr jāmi') between two or more analogous things that the falāsifa called the middle term (al-ḥadd al-awsaṭ). This is an innate capacity inherent in human fiṭra, whereby individuals make correct judgments naturally without recourse to tedious and artificial methods of formal logic (al-manṭiq). This is a universal method of judgment, used by nearly all the experts in all branches of

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science. Expert scientists first use their sense perceptions for compiling data and materials, then they reflect upon those data and materials, and reach judgments and conclusions.

For Ibn Taymiyya the only valid logical reasoning is reasoning by analogy (al-qiyās al-tamthīlī). Analogical reasoning differs from syllogism (al-qiyās al-manṭiqī) in that it does not need a universal in its premiss. Analogy proceeds from particular to particular, based on a sound comprehension of the point of conformity or disagreement between different facts. Ibn Taymiyya refuted those falāsifa who considered analogical reasoning less convincing than demonstration, because of its lack of universal premiss. For him, analogy is more natural than demonstration, since realities are particular and specific. Analogical reasoning is used by humankind as a natural method of discerning reality. This reasoning, which he called al-qiyās al-ṣaḥīḥ (sound logic), is for him a valid source of religious understanding after the Qur'ān, the Sunna and the ijmā' of the Salaf.

A sound analogy requires valid understanding of the "pivot of judgment," "the correlative value," or the "middle term" between two realities, either in terms of similarity (qiyās al-ṭard) or of contradistinction (qiyās al-'aks). The "pivot of judgment" of all religious teachings is man's welfare in this world and his happiness in the hereafter. Divine teaching is not ordained out of caprice or arbitrari-

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ness. Revelation is part of God's mercy for humankind, as religious tenets are prescribed for man's benefit.

But as societies and places change, a timely human inquiry (ijtihād) is necessary to bring religious principles down to the living social realities and their temporal and spatial demands. An ijtihād requires understanding of religious principles and comprehension of the relevant situations. Therefore an ijtihād is impossible without analogical reasoning. It is the indispensability of qiyās for ijtihād that makes it a valid method of making judgments and source of religious understanding, supplementary to the Holy Book and the Tradition. Many of the Companions were practitioners of ijtihād (mujtahidūn) when the situation called for it, and the practice of qiyās was also the established method among them.[1]

Since an ijtihād implies human interference, the product of an ijtihād is never final and its doctrinal value cannot be absolute. The spatial and temporal variables of human societies are so numerous that it is virtually impossible to take all of them into account in an ijtihād--hence its relativity and fallibility. Ijtihād is even more falli-

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[1]A very useful discussion of the problem of ijtihād and its relation to the concepts of Sunna and ijmā' in early Islam has been made by Fazlur Rahman, "Concepts Sunnah, Ijtihād and Ijmā' in the Early Period," Islamic Studies (Karachi) 1 (March 1962):5-21.

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ble because it entails the concept of istiḥsān or iṣtiṣlāḥ, which considers living social realities and other factors which affect the welfare of the whole community.

If the program of Islam to create human welfare is to be materialized, ijtihād is indispensable. A true ijtihād, which is a creative task--despite its defects--is still better than taqlīd, because taqlīd, which is an uncreative method of judgment, can be irrelevant to the real demands of the society, and thus be harmful.

Since law and order and political stability are for Ibn Taymiyya primary political values, he thought that governmental authorities should be the first to perform ijtihād. Any political arrangement should aim at establishing a situation where individuals find freedom to lead their lives in a way that brings them happiness in both the present world and the world after death. Therefore any act detrimental to political and social stability--such as rebellion--is condemned by Ibn Taymiyya as against the Sunna. If an authority performs an ijtihād, and a decision is taken based on that ijtihād, the community should obey it. Relevant to this is his citation of a Ḥadīth that the Prophet once said: "God will support this religion [even] with an unrighteous person and with people who do not possess morality."[1]

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[1]Naqḍ, p. 12.

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Ibn Taymiyya related his concept of al-qiyās al-ṣaḥīḥ to the Qur'ānic idea of mīzān (scale or balance). The Salaf understood mīzān as justice. Balance, justice, or moderation is the ideatum of God's natural law for human social life upon which depends the welfare of society. It also has always been the basic social intention of all prophetic missions. Ibn Taymiyya argues that with justice society would be well-established, regardless of the lack of piety of its individual members, and with injustice it would perish, no matter if its members were pious.[1] Thus ijtihād is the use of qiyās to find the best way to establish justice. Performing ijtihād itself is a pious act and therefore is rewarded for its own sake, whether the result is right or wrong. But an ijtihād with a rightly implemented, valid conclusion would bring benefit to all, and so a double reward to its performer.

Like the Ḥanbalites, Ibn Taymiyya seems to be an adamant literalist. His flat opposition to the methods of ta'wīl strengthen the impression. For Ibn Taymiyya Islamic religion is only what God and His Prophet have ordained, with examples of its implementation in the Traditions. Any addition to or diminution from those facts is a condemnable innovation or bid'a. What most causes innovations is free rational

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[1] al-Radd, pp. 271-273: al-Amr bi 'l-Ma'rūf, p. 40.

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interference in religious principles--for example, the concept of ta'wīl, metaphorical or symbolic interpretation. Once such interference is allowed, it gets out of control. A Pandora's box is opened, spreading confusion and disorientation.

Since the human mind is limited by spatial and temporal experiences, rational interpretation is inevitably limited by the materials and data at an individual's disposal. This was the case with the mutakallimūn and the falāsifa. Because the materials and data available to them were mainly provided by Hellenism, their perceptions of religion were a little more than a Hellenized Islam or an Islamized Hellenism. The bizarre kalām arguments of ṭafra, aḥwāl, and kasb were results of that Hellenization. Similarly, the ridiculous cosmology of falsafa presuming the existence of universal intellects, the spirituality of the spheres, and the volitionality of the heavenly bodies, was a result of the falāsifa's inability to go beyond their own intellectually limited milieu. As long as one was predisposed to rationalization, all of those conceptions could be presented as an apparently coherent doctrine. This is at best the temptation to make religion a complex, enigmatic, and tedious system of doctrines. A religion so hard to understand is also a religion deprived of its effectiveness for any human reform. According to Watt, Ibn Taymiyya's view "grew out of a realization that the concrete, 'poetical' language of the Qur'ān

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kept men closer to the deep springs of religious vitality than the abstractions of philosophical thinking."[1]

So Ibn Taymiyya proposed to understand religion by simply accepting its message and believing whatever literal meanings are implied in its expressions. He begins with the principle that God knows truth better than man does and knows better how to express that truth. The divine words in the sacred texts should be understood exactly as what they are designated to denote. The immediacy of a word's signification in mind should be taken as an indication of the mind's valid understanding of that word. According to a dictum of the Shāfi'ite uṣūl al-fiqh that Ibn Taymiyya also admired, "Immediacy of perception is the sign of the truth" (mubādarat al-fahm 'alāmat al-ḥaqīqa). Inimical to the dictum is any ta'wīl of the falāsifa's contention, which in effect always takes the form of "far-fetched interpretation" (al-tafsīr al-ba'īd).

Followed consistently, Ibn Taymiyya's principles might result in the purification and revitalization of religion. We can see that his vigorous refutation of kalām and falsafa was meant to clean out the religious thought-system, to return Islam to its original, simple, pristine nobility. A modern scholar observes that Islam, in a sense, is "the sim-

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[1]Watt, Philosophy, p. 162.

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plest and most powerful ideology in the world."[1] Ibn Taymiya seems to have seen that the strength of Islam lies in its simplicity.

If they want to participate successfully in this complicated world, contemporary Muslims need the simple but sensibly principled understanding of their religion. Hodgson indicates that modernity was an almost inevitable development of the world, and the natural growth of a cultural pattern after the age of "agrarianate citied societies" of which Islamic civilization was the culmination. Before its actual beginnings in Northwestern Europe, modernity had been an equal possibility for many cultural centers of the globe besides Europe, particularly China and the Islamic World. As to why it did not emerge in the Islamic world, Hodgson suggests that one of the many possible reasons was that Muslims concentrated their material and intellectual investments too much in a limited area of life activities.[2] Such concentration of investment may have been unavoidable, but the lack of diversification has made Muslim peoples backward in fields necessary for making the breakthrough to modernity. The exhaustive, hair-splitting elaborations of religious ar-

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[1]Patrick O'Donovan, "The Western Revolution in the East," in East and West, ed. Sir Steven Runciman, (Kent, England: The Institute for Cultural Research, 1978), p. 23.

[2]Hodgson, Venture, 3:182, 196-197 and 204.

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guments, as represented, for example, by works in fiqh law, has not only blurred much more basic principles and orientations of the religion, but has been time- and energy-consuming. Submerged in minutiae, the Muslims lost the principles.

Viewed from such a perspective, Ibn Taymiyya's reform six centuries ago should be a great contribution to modern Muslims. But one question remains: would his methodology, followed fully and consistently, liberate Muslims from the minutiae of religious doctrines and bring back Islam's noble simplicity? Considering Ibn Taymiyya's emphasis on ijtihād and his war on taqlīd, the answer should be affirmative. However, his strong and even fanatical adherence to Traditions can only be worrisome to Muslims concerned with modernity. Adhering to a Tradition, especially a sound one, is religiously justifiable, but accepting the whole corpus of Ḥadīth reports as genuine, sacred codifications of Traditions, even those which have been considered authentic, is problematical. The proscription of human interference in religion--the basis of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine--if applied to the Ḥadīth codifications would make it hard for them to stand on a claim of religious authority.

Taking into account the oral culture of the Arabs, it is certain that there were Prophetic Ḥadīths circulating among the Companions and the Successors. Some of those Ḥadīths must have reached us through the books of Sunan. But the existing collection of Ḥadīths did not evolve until two

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to three centuries after the Prophet. Many of those Ḥadīths were compiled using the living customary practices, mostly the products of the ijmā' of the community and the ijtihād of the fuqahā'. Sunna, as embodied in the Ḥadīth reports, will remain extremely useful to Muslims.[1] But conscientious Muslims should be fully aware of the historical background of those codifications. Following Ḥadīth reports uncritically could result in "following the early ninth century's conception of the example of Muhammad, and therefore the early ninth century's values."[2]

Ibn Taymiyya's methodology, as far as his strong adherence to Ḥadīth reports is concerned, offers no guarantee for the liberation of Muslims from doctrinal minutiae. Modern scholarship on Islam would help Ibn Taymiyya's methodology to achieve its goal, the purification of Islam. Modern research of the history of Islam and its civilization might reveal which elements in Islamic thought are "real" Islam and which are results of historical developments of Muslim peoples and their cultures, products of the consensus (ijmā') of the community and individual inquiries (ijtihād) of Muslim scholars and leaders.

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[1]For more elaborate discussion of the problem, see Fazlur Rahman, "Sunna and Ḥadīth," Islamic Studies (Karachi) 1 (June 1962):1-36.

[2]Watt, Philosophy, p. 75.

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Ibn Taymiyya's system, especially as represented by the Wahhābite reform in Arabia, is often compared with the Protestant Reformation. That reform in Christianity was soon to be followed by revolutions in England and France; but the reform in Islam has yet to show its relevance to modernity.[1] This situation is aggravated by the rather negative attitude of Ibn Taymiyya's system towards science. His system would be more relevant to modern Muslims if he had been more positive towards non-religious science. He remarked that medical science is very useful, even as useful as the religious science of fiqh.[2] He also admitted that the falāsifa were more authoritative in natural sciences than the mutakallimūn, just as the mutakallimūn were more competent in theological matters than the falāsifa--an admission that recognizes the necessarily differentiated scientific sources and authorities. All of this indicates that Ibn Taymiyya was not all that negative towards non-religious science, but he was only a little more than neutral. He stated, for instance, that mathematics, despite the validity of its basic arguments, "does not bring perfection to the human soul, nor save man from castigation of God, nor lead him to a happy life."[3] He also refused to admit the competence and validity of mathe-

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[1]Nicholson, Literary History, pp. 467-468.

[2]Naqḍ, p. 167. [3]al-Radd, p. 135.

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matical astronomy (ʿilm al-ḥisāb) in determining the beginning of the lunar months--to know, for example, the first days of Ramaḍān and Shawwāl.[1]

Yet one may still be justified in arguing that a proper understanding of Ibn Taymiyya's refutation of kalām and falsafa would smoothe the way for Muslims to a more principled attitude towards modern science. His criticism of the Aristotelian syllogism and definition is most relevant here. Aristotle is correctly regarded as a scientifically minded thinker, carefully limiting philosophy to observable things. He was rightly critical of Plato's imaginative speculation, especially his theory of Form. Yet Aristotle's own concept of Form "as the object of definition that describes a thing's essential nature" is of the same obscurity as Plato's, and both do nothing to provide explanation of the nature of things. Modern science has been made possible only after its liberation from such obscurities of Aristotelianism.[2]

Despite his strong advocacy of analogical rather than syllogical reasoning, Ibn Taymiyya is considered by one modern scholar as still "extremely Aristotelian."[3] Yet his

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[1]Ibid., pp. 264-265.

[2]The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. "Universals" by A.D. Woozley.

[3]Peters, Aristotle, p. 202.

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epistemology, based on fiṭra and sense perception, coupled with his vehement rejection of the philosophers' universals, has made some scholars characterize him as an empiricist.[1] Iqbal mentioned Ibn Taymiyya as an advocate of induction, the method of observation and experiment.[2] Al-Nashshār saw in Ibn Taymiyya proof that in the Middle Ages Muslims were the only people who realized the serious defects of Greek logic and criticized it accordingly--long before Roger Bacon and Francis Bacon.[3] Ibn Taymiyya has even been described as the "first founder of Mill's system of Logic and the fore-runner of Hume's philosophy."[4]

Montgomery Watt remarks on the superficiality of Wahhābites' perception of Ibn Taymiyya's system,[5] which might not have come about if the Wahhābites had understood their doctrinal ancestor's more profound methodology. Yet Wahhābism has served its purpose in reforming Islam these last two centuries. The Wahhābite movement has inspired Muslims in

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[1]Kamali, Islamic Thought, p. 76 footnote 36. See al-Radd, pp. 80-86.

[2]Iqbal, Reconstruction, p. 129.

[3]See ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār, in his Introduction to al-Suyūṭī, Juhd al-Qarīḥa, p. م (Arabic letter Mīm).

[4]Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, "Muslim and Greek Scholars of Philosophy", Islamic Culture (Hyderabad, 1927), as quoted in his Preface to al-Radd, p. ر (Arabic letter Rā').

[5]Watt, Philosophy, p. 165.

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many countries to launch their reform program for their societies. The movement also inspired Muslim modernists, since the moral motivation of the movement

> survived as a general legacy of the Wahhābī revolt after its first intolerant and fanatical phase had passed, and, combined with the general liberation of the mind and the spirit, paved the way for Modernist Muslims to overcome the literalism and fundamentalism of the Wahhābīs themselves and to allow for the scriptural text itself to be treated and interpreted on moral liberal lines.[1]

In a world of contradictions, Ibn Taymiyya's legacy is not exempt from being perceived in contradictory terms. Although he spent his life opposing the popular custom of venerating tombs of saints, Ibn Taymiyya's tomb at Damascus is revered by Muslims as the tomb of a saint.[2]

To take this irony more positively, such veneration might indicate the need of modern man for spiritual guidance. Partially, superficially understood, Ibn Taymiyya would only aggravate this need, because of the strong impression of his literalism and his unrelenting, jurisprudentially-minded orientation. But Ibn Taymiyya was a member of the Qādirī ṭarīqa (Ṣūfī order), the eponym of which happened to be a Ḥanbalite himself. He wanted to apply the principle of ijtihād to taṣawwuf, the spiritual path of Islam. He has even been considered the pioneer of a Neo-Ṣūfism which would

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[1]Rahman, Islam, p. 199.

[2]Nicholson, Literary History, p. 463.

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check the heterodox syncretism of most of the ṭarīqa practices and put them under the control of the solidly-based Islamic intellectualism.[1]

To make Ibn Taymiyya's system more responsive to the needs of Muslims today, such Islamically "orthodox" spiritualism should be complemented by his advocacy of toleration and moderation. It is ironic that he often could not refrain from harsh intolerance in his arguments, a fact that has made some people see him as an "arrogant," "haughty," "die-hard."[2] But his insistence on the ideology of ahl al-sunna wa 'l-jamā'a was rooted in his conviction that they are the ideal grouping of the believers, the moderator (wasaṭ) among all factions in the Muslim community:

> They were called ahl al-sunna wa 'l-jamā'a because they confirmed the practical and the consistently-followed Tradition, whether it is the mandatory or the optional one. They gave primacy to accord and agreement over conflict and dissension. Therefore among their characteristics was abstention from excommunicating the People of Qibla (ahl al-qibla) and from holding them as astray only because of some differences.[3]

Thus, within the doctrine of toleration, he gives every

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[1]Thomas Mitchel, "Ibn Taymiyya's Sharḥ on the Futūḥ al-Ghayb of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī," Hamdard Islamicus (Karachi) 4 (Summer, 1981):8; Rahman, Islam, p. 195.

[2]For a discussion of the accusation that Ibn Taymiyya was a "die-hard," see 'Abduṣ-Ṣamad Sharafuddīn in his Introduction to Majmū'a Tafsīr Ibn Taymiyya, pp. 12-15. Cf. 'Uways, Ibn Taymiyya, p. 262.

[3]Risāla Khilāf al-Umma fī 'l-'Ibādāt (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Manār, 1325 A.H.), p. 3.

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school its due according to the tightly-observed hierarchy of judgment in the Islamic system:

> The experts in fiqh, concerning external acts, speak about exoteric religious observances. The people of taṣawwuf and asceticism discuss the nature of intention and volition. The specialists in theories and kalām, also the authorities in theological matters from among the Traditionalists and others, talk about science, knowledge, and conceptions which are the basis of volition. They all say that religious observance should be accompanied by intention, and that intention is not valid unless it is based on knowledge of God, the object of intention and worship. All this is true. There should be knowledge of God, the object of worship, and of how He is to be worshipped.[1]

It would be fairer to Ibn Taymiyya to remember how he insists that people should be judged only on the basis of their taqwā (God fearing) and the extent of their service to humankind, not their ascriptive qualities.[2]

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[1] Ma'ārij, p. 193. Cf. Laoust, Schismes, p. 272; Laoust, Methodologie, p. 76.

[2] al-Muntaqā, pp. 246-247.

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